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THE PERSONAL ART

THE HERITAGE OF POETRY

English Poems from Chaucer to the Present Day

CHOSEN AND EDITED BY PHILIP WAYNE

THE PERSONAL ART

An Anthology of English Letters

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PHILIP WAYNE



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Introduction

THE purpose of this book is to offer to the general reader something of the friendliness and wit and feeling that can be found in the best of our English letter-writers. Some comments are added with the aim of answering questions that may arise, and of supplying occasionally a focus or an enlargement of the picture. There is one question, however, that the general reader, possibly unaccustomed to this department of literature, has a right to ask at the outset, and that is 'Why should I be reading letters intended for other people, written perhaps from a bygone background with which I have little or nothing in common?'

That fundamental question is perhaps best met by one equally ingenuous: 'Do you like to make acquaintances? If so, here are some that you might be sorry to miss.' The question of the reader's being possibly an intruder is interesting, and it must be faced: but first let it be said that all these letters have been chosen for their human and not their historical interest; and that, while outward fashions alter, human nature has shown in times known to us very little change, certainly none since the modern writing of Dorothy Osborne, whose letters begin the book.

To be sure, the exercise of a little sympathy is needed, if we are to win entertainment and wisdom from letters of other people and other times. Good letter-writers are concerned, after all, with being themselves and speaking to their friends, and not with the task of handing down to us, in lasting revelation, their compelling thoughts or emotions, a task proper to the major arts. And so, to take the sweetest of letter-writers, Cowper, in his quiet life at Olney, we find that we cannot enter into his charming excitements or affectionate ties unless we project ourselves, as it were, into his homely setting, leaving behind us for the time our ideologies and our saxophones. There are, I believe, a comfortable number of us able to do this without a pang. The age is so full of inhuman noise that superficial observers are apt to think the noise is in fact the age; whereas the truth is that many

people are still quietly and deeply interested in the ways of humanity, so that even a jaded cinema audience will show an immediate ripple of enjoyment at any really human touch. The people who are dead to the fragrance, wit and generosity of good human correspondence are those who, in the words of George Saintsbury, would want to put cayenne pepper in their brandy ; and they are still in the minority.

Letter-writing has been well called 'The Gentlest Art', but it is an art that baffles contemplation in its scope, since the subject of a good letter may be anything on earth, from wrath to rabbits, and the style may vary infinitely not only with the man but with the mood. Indeed, if you come to draft rules or an ethic of letter-writing, you feel that you are touching a kaleidoscope that mocks definition. Nevertheless, some principles can be traced.

Good letter-writers, observes George Gordon, will be found among 'people who have achieved a certain poise', who have 'either elegantly or humorously discounted the more vulgar objects of human ambition' and have 'arrived, in short, at a common understanding of the game of life'. And another Oxford critic, John Bailey, demanding 'ease and naturalness', says, 'the ever-present consciousness that one is simply one's self and not an author or an editor (is) of all qualities the most essential in a letter'.

This 'be natural' postulate is very old. Saintsbury instances Demetrius Phalareus on writing one's letters 'the way a man would talk to his friend', and adds that Bishop Synesius in his letters of philosophy was natural enough to be making love to Hypatia. These authors are not everybody's fire-side companions ; but one does know that Jane Austen felt similarly pleased to have 'attained the true art of letter-writing' . . . 'I have been talking to you,' says she, 'almost as fast as I could the whole of this letter' ; while another great lady, Mme de Sévigné, regal in letter-writing, told her daughter that simplicity was everything. One turn of the kaleidoscope, however, and they all receive a contradiction ; for nobody could say that Johnson's letter to Chesterfield was not among the best ever written, and it is not simple, but full of conscious authorship. It must be admitted that very few people can be quite themselves in public ; but in the magnificent case of Johnson, at least, a sense of open indignation seems to bring out his style at its truest.

The first thing that we demand of a letter is that it shall ring true, that it shall arrest our attention with an authentic reason of writing. When we kindle towards those we love or admire, we dare to trust

that they will be interested in our local and personal adventures—love me, love my dog—and so the stimulus of confident affection may help a good letter-writer to invest even homely things with a strong vivacity—Cowper and his hares, Beeching and his train, Ramsay and his lump of marble—such as may prove infectious to generations of sympathetic and amused readers.

This is not to say that the subject matter in letters is to be our chief hope of satisfaction—any more than I meant to argue just now that the critics were wrong in condemning, in the main, a ‘bookish’ tone in letters. Indeed a certain frigidity is to be found in the letters of many great authors, and it is well diagnosed by the late Lord Birkenhead. ‘They are accustomed’, says he, ‘to address a contemporary public whose exact degree of attention they can undoubtedly measure, and a future posterity, concerning whose attitude to themselves they are as uncertain as they are hopeful. This habit is strong, and rules them when they use the post for purposes purely domestic or personal.’ Perhaps it would be fair to add that the very great ones, as I suggested earlier, are concerned with great impulses of art, envisaging life and its values, rather than with entertainment or the question of public esteem. Thus the great artist is not so near to our ‘gentlest art’ as is the diarist: Pepys, for instance, almost may be said to have been writing letters of curiosity and confession to himself.

Anybody preparing a book like this may at least learn not to dogmatise. In letters both contents and style may be almost anything. Landor sends a fierce snub; Walpole paints his times or asks forgiveness; R. L. S. describes his horse, or thanks his nurse; Keats faces poetic responsibility; doctor Brown looks on death, poet Gray on dreaming beeches or a bursting glutton. Sometimes closeness of style to purpose has an allure in itself; as when St Paul tells Timothy (I. v. 23) to ‘drink no longer water but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake’; Wesley’s ‘Do not scream’ (p. 36) is a fair example in this kind, and so is the cricketer’s letter to Ponsonby (p. 190). But on the whole I feel that the quaintness of practical earnest is matter for no more than a single smile and not very funny, like the Paston letters, invaluable though they are for the historian. The struggles of illiteracy, ancient or modern, provide another kind of letter which, though odd and possibly pathetic, does not stir us to participation.

Still, the most repellent letters are those that try too obviously to kindle, and succeed in being, as a schoolboy said of a bishop, ‘beastly hearty’. Lamb could sustain his banter to Manning at an extraordinary

pitch of mischievous high spirits ; but the others, from Stevenson (at his least good) downwards, rarely bring it off. Dickens in occasional excitement comes near to the rare high mark ; so does Sydney Smith, in a combustion of wit, and Lewis Carroll in his own tentative lunacy ; but the principle is well illustrated in the flat failure of letters in rhyme, —even when they come from the surest of letter-writers, Cowper or Thackeray.

It is true that we may have, sometimes, in reading other people's letters, the distasteful feeling of prying or eavesdropping, and this is undoubtedly a difficulty that makes demands upon editorial discrimination. A man beside himself should undoubtedly be left in private. Love letters might seem the first to come under this ban, yet not all need be barred : it is hardly decent to pry upon the desperately unhappy passion of Keats for Fanny Brawne ; but Captain Richard Steele's utter distraction is a joy to the reader, and as for Boswell making an ass of himself to his ' Princess ', I, for one, am as ready to eavesdrop as I should be to get me into the box-tree to listen to Malvolio. People apparently like to print the letter that poor shattered Lamb wrote when his mother lay killed by the hand of his sister ; but John Penruddock's letter in face of death is quite another matter, for he expects execution with a pious and practical calm that has the settled repose of nobility.

Repose is in fact the quality fundamentally needed in the essentially civilized function of letter-writing. J. C. Bailey hit the nail on the head when he objected to the demand for the conversational interplay of eye and voice in a letter, whether grave or gay. ' It is the same thing ', says he, ' as one sees in portraits where a too energetic or spirited attitude nearly always produces failure. Whatever makes a claim to permanence must have at least a suggestion of repose about it.'

That qualification sets letter-writing upon a degree of art, a degree that is still gentle, however, in its pretensions. It might be added here that, as letters do not pretend to the completeness of a work of art, the anthologist need make no apology for giving extracts ; moreover, since great authors can be very indifferent letter-writers, we are mercifully free from the framework of a literary ' course '.

The letters are here to be enjoyed for themselves, for their revelation of personality, for their frequently inspired fitness of expression. The writers of all of them owe their varied power and vivacity to an English politeness, as to the ground from which they have sprung, a civilization that shows indeed little sign of falling out of date, for it is

a far bigger thing than fashions, whether of literary styles or of political persuasions.

To return for a moment to the Comments, I hope that they will help the less experienced reader towards the pleasure of weighing values and of tracing links. The notes are more frequent, therefore, in the remoter periods ; and the expert reader, if he so wishes, need have no difficulty in passing them by.

P. W.

London, 1949.

Cards, Warm Love and Cold Physic

DOROTHY OSBORNE TO SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE¹

6 March, 1653

Sir,

Your last letter came like a pardon to one upon the block. I have given over the hopes on't, having received my letters by the other carrier, who uses always to be last. The loss put me hugely out of order, and you would both have pitied and laughed at me if you could have seen how woodenly I entertained the widow, who came hither the day before, and surprised me very much. Not being able to say anything, I got her to cards, and there with a great deal of patience lost my money to her—or rather I gave it as my ransom. In the midst of our play, in comes my blessed boy with your letter, and, in earnest, I was not able to disguise the joy it gave me, though one was by that is not much your friend, and took notice of a blush that for my life I could not keep back. I put up the letter in my pocket, and made what haste I could to lose the money I had left, that I might take occasion to

¹ Dorothy Osborne had to wait six years for the removal of barriers to her marriage with Temple, and her patient longing is the more touching when one considers the natural vivacity of her wit. Her royalist family, and particularly brother Henry, with whom she lived at Chicksands, disapproved of the parliamentary advancement of the Temples, while Sir John Temple thought her not a good match for his son. The position seemed hopeless, and Dorothy could be melancholy (see p. 3); but her inability to condone double disobedience, her lover's or her own, in such circumstances is merely in tune with the integrity of her whole life and upbringing.

The story, with its vicissitudes, including at last the disfigurement of the charming girl by small-pox, should be read in Sir Edward Parry's edition of the Letters, whose text is here followed. The chief thing for us is that she had a most natural pen, so that, with a little study, her warm-hearted gaiety and fidelity come ever freshly to us. It is Macaulay's honour to have discovered the true worth of these letters. 'We would gladly purchase equally interesting billets', he says, 'with ten times their weight in State papers.'

The lovers had to employ subterfuge to keep letters from the sharp eyes of her brother, Henry. The parson, Mr Gibson, mentioned on p.4, helped them.

go fetch some more ; but I did not make such haste back again, I can assure you. I took time enough to have coined myself some money if I had had the art on't, and left my brother enough to make all his addresses to her if he were so disposed. I know not whether he was pleased or not, but I am sure I was.

You make so reasonable demands that 'tis not fit you should be denied. You ask my thoughts but at one hour ; you will think me bountiful, I hope, when I shall tell you that I know no hour when you have them not. No, in earnest, my very dreams are yours, and I have got such a habit of thinking of you that any other thought intrudes and grows uneasy to me. I drink your health every morning in a drench that would poison a horse I believe, and 'tis the only way I have to persuade myself to take it.¹ 'Tis the infusion of steel, and makes me so horribly sick, that every day at ten o'clock I am making my will and taking leave of all my friends. You will believe you are not forgot then. They tell me I must take this ugly drink a fortnight, and then begin another as bad ; but unless you say so too, I do not think I shall. 'Tis worse than dying by the half.

Suitor Mocked and Sister Scolded

DOROTHY OSBORNE TO SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

19 June, 1653

I could tell you such a story (it is too long to be written), as would make you see (what I never discovered in my life before) that I am a valiant lady. In earnest, we have had such a skirmish and upon so foolish an occasion, as I cannot tell which is strangest. The Emperor² and his proposals began it ; I talked merrily on it till I saw my brother put on his sober face, and could hardly then believe he was in earnest. It seems he was, for when I had spoke freely my meaning it wrought so with him as to fetch up all that lay upon his stomach. ~All the people that I had ever in my life refused were brought again upon the stage, like Richard the III's ghosts, to reproach me withal ; and all the kind-

¹ She had to leave a dagger in white wine and drink the metallic infusion next day.

² One of the many suitors her brother urged on her notice. He was a Sir *Justinian Isham*, a widower. Dorothy was later very merry about his consoling himself with a second wife.

ness his discoveries could make I had for you was laid to my charge. My best qualities (if I have any that are good) served but for aggravations of my fault, and I was allowed to have wit and understanding and discretion in other things, that it might appear I had none in this. Well, 'twas a pretty lecture, and I grew warm with it after a while ; in short, we came so near to an absolute falling out, that 'twas time to give over, and we said so much that we have hardly spoken a word together since. But 'tis wonderful to see what curtseys and legs pass between us ; and as before we were thought the kindest brother and sister, we are certainly now the most complimentary couple in England. 'Tis a strange change, and I am very sorry for it, but I'll swear I know not how to help it.

*Absence*¹

DOROTHY OSBORNE TO SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

10 July, 1653

You needed not have feared that I should take occasion from your not answering my last not to write this week. You are as much pleased, you say, with writing to me as I can be to receive your letters. Why should you not think the same of me? In earnest you may, and if you love me you will, but then how much more satisfied should I be if there were no need of these and we might talk all that we write and more. Shall we ever be so happy?

Last night I was in the garden till 11 o'clock. It was the sweetest night that e'er I saw. The garden looked so well and the jasmine smelt beyond all perfume. And yet I was not pleased. The place had all the charms it used to have when I was most satisfied with it, and had you been there I should have liked it much more than ever I did ; but that not being, it was no more to me than the next field, and only served me for a place to roam in without disturbance.

¹ The gentle sadness reminds one of her patience in another letter, 'nothing shows we deserve a punishment so much as our murmuring at it.'

Coxcombs

DOROTHY OSBORNE TO SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

2 October, 1653

In my opinion these great scholars are not the best writers (of letters, I mean) ; of books, perhaps they are. I never had, I think, but one letter from Sir Justinian, but 'twas worth twenty of anybody's else to make me sport. It was the most sublime nonsense that in my life I ever read ; and yet, I believe, he descended as low as he could to come near my weak understanding. 'Twill be no compliment after this to say I like your letters in themselves ; not as they come from one that is not indifferent to me, but, seriously, I do. All letters, methinks, should be free and easy as one's discourse ; not studied as an oration, nor made up of hard words like a charm. 'Tis an admirable thing to see how some people will labour to find out terms that may obscure a plain sense. Like a gentleman I knew, who would never say 'the weather grew cold', but that 'winter began to salute us'. I have no patience for such coxcombs, and cannot blame an old uncle of mine that threw the standish¹ at his man's head because he writ a letter for him where, instead of saying (as his master bid him), 'that he would have writ himself, but that he had the gout in his hand'; he said 'that the gout in his hand would not permit him to put pen to paper'. The fellow thought that he had mended it mightily, and that putting pen to paper was much better than plain writing.

*Early Dreams of Aviation—and Another
Unacceptable Lover*

DOROTHY OSBORNE TO SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

16 October, 1653

. . . You could not but have laughed if you had seen me last night. My brother and Mr. Gibson² were talking by the fire ; and I sat by, but as no part of the company. Amongst other things (which I did not at all mind), they fell into a discourse of flying ; and both agreed

¹ Stand, or case, for pen and ink.

² Mr. Gibson, see introductory note above.

it was very possible to find out a way that people might fly like birds, and despatch their journeys so : I, that had not said a word all night, started up at that, and desired they would say a little more in it, for I had not marked the beginning; but instead of that, they both fell into so violent a laughing, that I should appear so much concerned in such an art; but they little knew of what use it might have been to me. Yet I saw you last night, but 'twas in a dream; and before I could say a word to you, or you to me, the disorder my joy to see you had put me into waked me. Just now I was interrupted, too, and called away to entertain two dumb gentlemen;—you may imagine whether I was pleased to leave my writing to you for their company;—they have made such a tedious visit, too; and I am so tired with making signs and tokens for everything I had to say. Good God! how do those that live always with them? They are brothers; and the eldest is a baronet, has a good estate, a wife and three or four children. He was my servant¹ heretofore, and comes to see me still for old love's sake; but if he could have made me mistress of the world I could not have had him; and yet I'll swear he has nothing to be disliked in him but his want of tongue, which in a woman might have been a virtue. . . .

The Suitor Discomfited

DOROTHY OSBORNE TO SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

12 February, 1654

I have the cabinet, and 'tis in earnest a pretty one; though you will not own it for a present. I'll keep it as one, and 'tis like to be yours no more but as 'tis mine. I'll warrant you would ne'er have thought of making me a present of charcoal as my servant James² would have done, to warm my heart I think he meant it. But the truth is, I had been inquiring for some (as 'tis a commodity scarce enough in this country), and he hearing of it, told the baily he would give him some if 'twere for me. But this is not all. I cannot forbear telling you the other day he made me a visit, and I, to prevent his making discourses to me, made Mrs. Goldsmith and Jane sit by all the while.³ But he came

¹ My suitor.

² Another suitor, now untraceable.

• ³ Mrs Goldsmith, wife of the Vicar of Campton, near-by. Jane is a companion-maid.

better provided than I could have imagined. He brought a letter with him, and gave it me as one that he had met with directed to me, he thought it came out of Northamptonshire. I was upon my guard, and suspecting all he said, examined him so strictly where he had it before I would open it, that he was hugely confounded, and I confirmed that 'twas his. I laid it by and wished then they would have left us, that I might have taken notice on't to him. But I had forbid it them so strictly before, that they offered not to stir farther than to look out at window, as not thinking there was any necessity of giving us their eyes as their ears ; but he that saw himself discovered took that time to confess to me (in a whispering voice that I could hardly hear myself) that the letter . . . was of *great concern* to him, and begged I would read it, and give him my answer. I took it up presently, as if I had meant it, but threw it, sealed as it was, into the fire, and told him (as softly as he had spoke to me) I thought that the quickest and best way of answering it. He sat awhile in great disorder, without speaking a word, and so rose and took his leave. Now what think you, shall I ever hear of him more?

SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN TO FAITH COGHILL

Madam,

The artificer having never before met with a drowned Watch, like an ignorant physician has been so long about the cure that he hath made me very unquiet that your commands should be so long deferred ; however, I have sent the watch at last and envy the felicity of it, that it should be so near your side, and so often enjoy your Eye, and be consulted by you how your Time shall pass while you employ your hand in your excellent works. But have a care of it, for I put such a Spell into it that every Beating of the Ballance will tell you 'tis the pulse of my Heart which labours as much to serve you and more Truly than the watch ; for the watch I believe will sometimes lie, and sometimes perhaps be idle and unwilling to go, having received so much injury by being drenched in that briny bath, that I despair it should ever be a True Servant to you more. But as for me (unless you drown me too in my Tears) you may be confident I shall never cease to be, Your most affectionate, humble servant,

CHR. WREN .

' In the Article of Death '

JOHN PENRUDDOCK¹ TO HIS WIFE

4 May, 1655

Dearest Best of Creatures!

I had taken leave of the world when I received yours : it did at once recall my fondness to life, and enable me to resign it. As I am sure I shall leave none behind me like you, which weakens my resolution to part from you, so when I reflect I am going to a place where there are none but such as you, I recover my courage. But fondness breaks in upon me ; and as I would not have my tears flow to-morrow, when your husband and the father of our dear babes is a public spectacle, do not think meanly of me, that I give way to grief now in private, when I see my sand run so fast, and within a few hours I am to leave you helpless and exposed to the merciless and insolent that have wrongfully put me to a shameful death, and will object the shame to my poor children. I thank you for all your goodness to me, and will endeavour so to die as to do nothing unworthy that virtue in which we have mutually supported each other, and for which I desire you not to repine that I am first to be rewarded, since you ever preferred me to yourself in all other things. Afford me, with cheerfulness, the precedence of this. I desire your prayers in the article of death ; for my own will then be offered for you and yours.

*The Grim Servant*²

SAMUEL PEPYS TO SIR EDWARD MONTAGU

London, 26 December, 1657

... On Thursday night there came a woman from Mrs. Ann Crewe, whom I received. But before I said anything to her concerning the house, she began and asked me if I knew what her work must be. I told her I supposed Mrs. Crewe had acquainted her with that ; she

¹ A royalist who tried in vain to renew the exiled King's cause in arms ; his force was quickly outnumbered and he was beheaded at Exeter.

² Saintsbury has pointed out that the letters of Pepys are dull as compared with the private vivacity of his Diary. But the troublesome servant flits past like a figure from the Diary ; and the two letters that follow have reached a further shore of sprightliness in tranquillity.

told me, no. Whereupon I told her what had been the office of them that had been before her. She answered she had never been used to make fires, wash rooms or cloths, scour or do anything like that, and that she expected only to take charge of the goods and oversee other maids as a housekeeper. I answered I knew nothing to the contrary but that her work was to be as theirs that had been in her place before, but that if your intentions were otherwise, Mrs. Crewe could best advertise her. So she lodged here that night, and desired to be excused from undertaking anything, till she had advised again with Mrs. Crewe. Whereupon the next morn she went away and since I have not heard of her. . . .

The Great Diarists in a Tranquil Autumn of Life

JOHN EVELYN TO SAMUEL PEPYS

Wotton, 22 July, 1700

I could no longer suffer this old servant of mine to pass and repass so near Clapham without a particular account of your health and all your happy family. You will now inquire what I do here? Why, as the patriarchs of old, I pass the days in the fields, among horses and oxen, sheep, cows, bulls, and sows, *et cetera pecora campi*.¹ We have, thank God! finished our hay harvest prosperously. I am looking after my hinds, providing carriage and tackle against reaping time and sowing. What shall I say more? *Venio ad voluptates agricolarum*, which Cicero, you know, reckons amongst the most becoming diversions of old age; and so I render it. This without: now within doors, never was any matron more busy than my wife, disposing of our plain country furniture for a naked old extravagant house, suitable to our employments. She has a dairy, and distaffs, for *lac, linum, et lanam*, and is become a very Sabine. But can you thus hold out? will my friend say; is philosophy, Gresham College, and the example of Mr. Pepys, and agreeable conversation of York Buildings, quite forgotten and abandoned? No, no! *Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret*. Know I have been ranging of no fewer than thirty large cases

¹ The Latin passages: 'and the rest of the beasts of the field' . . . 'I come to the delights of the farmers' (cf. Virgil, *Georg.*, II, 458) . . . 'milk, flax and wool' . . . 'you may pitch nature out with a fork, but back it will come again' (Horace, *Ep.*, I, 10. 24) . . . 'to pack up my baggage'.

of books, destined for a competent standing library, during four or five days wholly destitute of my young coadjutor, who, upon some pretence of being much engaged in the mathematics, and desiring he may continue his course at Oxford till the beginning of August, I have wholly left it to him. You will now suspect something by this disordered hand ; truly I was too happy in these little domestic affairs, when, on the sudden, as I was about my books in the library, I found myself sorely attacked with a shivering, followed by a feverish indisposition, and a strangury, so as to have kept, not my chamber only, but my bed, till very lately, and with just so much strength as to scribble these lines to you. For the rest, I give God thanks for this gracious warning, my great age calling upon me *sarcinam componere* every day expecting it, who have still enjoyed a wonderful course of bodily health for forty years. . . .

SAMUEL PEPYS TO JOHN EVELYN

Clapham, 7 August, 1700

I have no herds to mind, nor will my Doctor allow me any books here. What then will you say, too, are you doing? Why, truly, nothing that will bear naming, and yet I am not, I think, idle ; for who can, that has so much of past and to come to think on, as I have? And thinking, I take it, is working, though many forms beneath what my Lady and you are doing. But pray remember what o'clock it is with you and me ; and be not now, by overstimulating, too bold with your present complaint, any more than I dare be with mine, which, too, has been no less kind in giving me my warning, than the other to you, and to neither of us, I hope, and, through God's mercy, dare say, either unlooked for or unwelcome. I wish, nevertheless, that I were able to administer any thing towards the lengthening that precious rest of life which God has thus long blessed you, and, in you, mankind, with ; but I have always been too little regardful of my own health, to be a prescriber to others. I cannot give myself the scope I otherwise should in talking now to you at this distance, on account of the care extraordinary I am now under from Mrs. Skinner's being suddenly fallen very ill ; but ere long I may possibly venture at entertaining you with something from my young man in exchange—I don't say in payment, for the pleasure you gratify me with from yours, whom I pray God to bless with continuing but what he is! and I'll ask no more for him. .

The Nasty Spa

MRS ELMES TO SIR RALPH VERNEY, BART ¹

Knaresborough Spa, 4 June, 1665

Dear Brother,

The 1st instant we arrived at the nasty Spa and have now began to drink the horrid sulphur water. Which, although as bad as is possible to be imagined, yet in my judgment pleasant to all the doings we have within doors, the house and all that is in it being horridly nasty and crowded up with all sort of company which we eat with in a room as the spiders are ready to drop into my mouth. And sure hath neither been well cleaned nor aired this dozen years. It makes me much more sick than the nasty water. Did you but see me you would laugh heartily at me.

But I say little of it to what I think. Then to mend all this, they go to supper at half an hour after six, so I save a bit and sup by myself two hours after them, which is the pleasantest thing I do here. We are sixteen of my uncle and aunt's family, and all in pension at 10s. a week for ourselves, and 7s. for our servants with lodgings in.

I have not heard from you I know not when, so in my opinion live here as if there were nobody else in the world, but just what I see of these bumpkins. . . .

Which is all from

Your truly affectionate sister and servant

M. ELMES

A Crack-brained Girl

LADY GARDINER TO SIR RALPH VERNEY, BART

4 May, 1674

Dear Brother,

I am glad you and your family is well. And I am much as I used to be. My husband, though he hath his cough, will not willingly defer his journey to London, so I say nothing but wish he had stayed at home, acknowledging my folly that I am never at heart's ease when

¹ For the Verney family see *Verney Memoirs* (1925) or Mr Bryant's excellent *Postman's Horn*, where a selection is presented, as are also letters from the Shakerley family.

he is at so great a distance. But your sex will follow your inclinations which is not for women's conveniences.

I should be more contented if his daughter Ursula were not here, who after eight months pleasure came home unsatisfied, declaring Preshaw was never so irksome to her, and now hath been at all the Salisbury races, dancing like wild with Mr. Clarke, whom Jack can give you a character of, and came home of a Saturday night just before our Winton races, at near twelve o'clock when my family was abed, with Mr. Charles Turner (a man I know not, Judge Turner's son, who was tried for his life last November for killing a man, one of the number that styles themselves Tyburn Club), and Mr. Clarke's brother, who sat up two nights till near three o'clock, and said she had never been in bed since she went away till four in the morning, and danced some nights till seven in the morning. Then she borrowed a coach and went to our races, and would have got dancers if she could, then brought home this crew with her again, and sat up the same time. All this has sufficiently vexed me.

Her father was six days of this time from home, and lay out three nights of it, and Friday she was brought home and brought with her Mr. Turner's linen to be mended and washed here and sent after him to London, where he went on Saturday, to see how his brother Mun is come of his trial for killing a man just before the last circuit. And since these were gone, I reflecting on these actions, and she declaring she could not be pleased without dancing twelve hours in the twenty-four, and taking it ill, I denied in my husband's absence to have seven ranting fellows come to Preshaw and bring music, was very angry and had ordered where they should all lie. She designed me to lie with Peg G., and I scaring her and contradicting her, we had a great quarrel, which made her father very angry with her. But if he would he had better judgment to make her stay at home, who is, I think, mad. Page says he is confident she is crack-brained. And now she condemns her father for not laying up money to marry her. . . .

I fear she will never be quiet at home, and we have not to give her to live abroad. . . . Pray excuse this trouble, since I wrote it to you as my secret misfortune that am in all conditions.

Your affectionate sister and servant

CARY G.

His Son's Box

EDMUND VERNEY TO HIS SON, EDMUND VERNEY

London, 22 January, 1685

Child,

I shall be very joyful to hear of your safe arrival at Oxford, according to my kind wishes which attended you all the way for your prosperous journey.

I have this day sent you (by Thomas Moore the Oxon carrier) all your things mentioned in this enclosed note, except your old camelot coat, which I did not think you would need nor worth sending ; your old hat I did not send neither, for it was so bad that I was ashamed of it. All your new things I bought you I put into a new box locked up and well corded up, and the key of this box I have also here-enclosed for you. But for the key of your trunk I could not find it, and it's no matter, for that lock is nothing worth, and Tom made a shift to lock it with a key of mine, and it is well corded besides.

In your old breeches which are in your new box, you will find your five laced bands (the sixth you carried with you) and a new pair of laced cuffs, and your two guineas in your fob, and a new knife and fork in your great pocket. And so God bless you, and send you well to do.

I am your loving father,

EDMUND VERNEY

In your trunk I have put for you

18 Seville oranges

6 Malaga lemons

3 pounds of brown sugar

1 pound of white powdered sugar made up in quarters

1 lb of brown sugar candy

$\frac{1}{4}$ of a lb of white sugar candy

1 lb of picked raisins, good for a cough

4 nutmegs.

No Acknowledgment

EDMUND VERNEY TO HIS SON, MUN VERNEY

29 January, 1685

Child,

Mr. Palmer had a letter from his son at Oxford last Saturday morning very early, and my cousin Denton Nicholas wrote to his parents

from Wycombe and again from Oxford since his last arrival. And when I take a journey I always write unto my father by every opportunity a perfect diurnal of my voyage and what else occurs worthy of remark. I writ^e to you a letter this day seven-night when I sent you your trunk and box, but never had any answer nor account from you since, which is such a piece of omission in you, to say no worse, that I believe neither Oxford nor Cambridge can parallel. For why I should be thus neglected by my son I cannot imagine : indeed I look upon it as an ill omen, that you should commit such a gross solecism at your first entrance into the University against your loving father

Support Better than Excuses

EDMUND VERNEY TO HIS SON, MUN VERNEY

London, 14 September, 1686

Child,

I received a letter lately from Mr. Sykes your tutor unto whom you are very much obliged. Take my word for it, albeit he makes a complaint of you for not frequenting a certain afternoon lecture as you were wont to do, yet otherwise he speaks very handsomely of you, which rejoices my heart. For I take him to be a plain dealer and an honest gentleman, and I hope you will deserve those many good commendations he hath given me of you.

It seems you tell him that you have particular reasons, that you cannot discover, why you come not to those lectures. This may possibly be, as to him and others, but as to me who am your father there can be none. Therefore, pray, let me know by the next post those particular reasons. And if I like them, I will do what I can with civility to get you excused. For look you Child, anyone may pretend particular reasons which one cannot discover for not doing what one ought to do or for doing what one ought not to do. But that sham will not pass among wise men : for such pretences to avoid one's duty are always (with justice) interpreted in ill sense, and I should be very sorry any such reflections should fall upon you. You are under government, as all subjects are in several kinds, and therefore are bound by laws and rules and precepts divine to obey.

Besides it is a wrong to the Society not to come to lectures, for if all others should forbear coming to them as you do, the lectures must fall, which are a support to a College, and so by degrees Arts and Sciences

and Learned Societies must dwindle away and dissolve to nothing. But I hope none of my posterity will ever be the *primum mobile* of such a mischief to Learning. And so I shall close up my discourse about this business for this time and longing for your answer about it. . . .

End of the Day

LADY RACHEL RUSSELL TO LORD RUSSELL ¹

Tunbridge Wells, 1678

After a toilsome day, there is some refreshment to be telling our story to our best friends. I have seen your girl well laid in bed, and ourselves have made our suppers upon biscuits, a ~~bottle~~ of white wine, and another of beer, mingled my uncle's whey with nutmeg and sugar. None are disposing to bed, not so much as complaining of weariness. Beds and things are all very well here ; our want is, yourself and good weather. But now I have told you our present condition ; to say a little of the past. I do really think, if I could have imagined the illness of the journey, it would have discouraged me ; it is not to be expressed how bad the way is from Sevenoaks ; but our horses did exceeding well, and Spencer, very diligent, often off his horse, to lay hold of the coach. I have not much more to say this night : I hope the quilt is remembered ; and Frances must remember to send more biscuits either when you come, or soon after. I long to hear from you, my dearest soul, and truly think your absence already an age. I have no mind to my gold plate : here is no table to set it on ; but if that does not come I desire you would bid Betty Foster send the silver glass I use every day. In discretion I haste to bed, longing for Monday, I assure you.

¹ The sweet dignity of Lady Rachel, whose husband was executed for his part in the Rye House plot, is well seen from her early and her later letter. Sydney Smith had a touch of Walpole's mischief when he wrote about her, to Walpole's Miss Berry, 'I thank you very much for the entertainment I have received from your book (*Life of Lady Rachel*). I should however have been afraid to marry such a woman as Lady Rachel ; it would have been too awful. There are pieces of china very fine and beautiful, but never intended for daily use.'

'Life is Checkered'

LADY RACHEL RUSSELL TO HER DAUGHTER, LADY ROOS

29 September, 1695

. . . Take it well, my love, I remind you of your duty, and let it be your part to strive to do it. To whom asks it shall be given ; you shall be contented if you desire it. I have experienced it, and just at your years, I bless God I can say—without vanity—what pleased me I enjoyed, what crossed me had not power to torment me long. I strove to think if my lot had not been what it was it might have been worse for me in regard to my eternal interest, and this might pass and other days come, or however the day of vexation would end. And I can't commend a better reflection than this, the troubles or pleasures that end with time are not to be affecting at so high a rate ; a year or two to some seems long, but twenty passed as nothing. I have felt many days of bitter grief, as well others of lesser trouble and provocation, and many of great and true happiness, which was made up by love and quiet at home, abroad friendships and innocent diversions, and yet, believe me, child, life is a continual labour checkered with care and pleasure. Therefore rejoice in your portion, take the world as you find it, and you will I trust find heaviness may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. It grows dark, your sister is to close this.

A Bad Reverend

ELIZABETH, LADY BRADSHAIGH TO PETER SHAKERLEY

Holker, 21 July, 1688

You had the fortune to send one of the basest and worst conditioned men with the children that ever came in any house, I mean Francis, their tutor, for he was a base lying fellow. I am sorry I should say so much of one of his coat, but it is truth, and those that tries him will find it. I do protest poor Roger told me he was very willing to go to any school you would send him to so that Francis might not teach him, for he would have taken the shoe off his foot and have beat poor Roger about his head with it and hath oft struck both him and his brother Will to the ground and punched them with his feet. So he

was a hare-brained fellow and not fit to teach any child. This is truth I do assure you and he is a very dangerous fellow to have in a house, and this I writ that you may be careful what you say afore him.

The Angry Guardian to His Young Half-brother

PETER SHAKERLEY TO GEORGE SHAKERLEY

27 April, 1700

George!

The account I have of your neglect of study and expense of money, notwithstanding your repeated promises to the contrary, is what I thought I should not have been troubled with any more considering the holy vows and resolutions you made. Is this ~~the~~ method to resemble me? Is this the method to retain me your loving brother? No, I'll assure you, it is not, and that you shall soon find if you do not from the receipt hereof amend, You have in two of your letters told me you do not live sneakingly, and this you think is a modish way of excusing your expenses, but you must know I do resent it as an extravagance ; and shall very considerably shorten your allowance for the future unless you forthwith reclaim and observe the wholesome rules I have in so many of my letters prescribed to you. Thus have I fairly cautioned you and so take you care at your peril.

Your brother Jack came hither last night, and shall come to you at Oxford, therefore do not you so much as think of coming hither, but rise early and fail not to come constantly both to morning and evening prayers before psalms begin, and keep close to your studies, and avoid all expenses whatsoever which are not absolutely necessary. This do if you expect any favour from

PETER SHAKERLEY

The Answer : Snub Declined

GEORGE SHAKERLEY (AGED 17½) TO PETER SHAKERLEY, M.P.

Brasenose College, Oxford

Last night in bed I received yours. Either part of it was sufficient to have kept me waking, though the cause might have risen from two different passions, joy and sorrow, sorrow for the first and joy for the

latter part of it. The news of my brother's safe return was too sweet not to have some allow of bitterness along with it, and if any set rules can be ascribed to Providence in her disposing of human affairs this may deservedly be esteemed one. I am sorry you should have such an account of me but must beg leave to think that they you have it from are neither your friends nor mine. I doubt not but there are these people in the worldly interest it is that I should not be in your favour. How far they are instrumental in insinuating a bad opinion of me into you, let God and their own consciences judge.

That I have not followed my studies as I ought to have done I confess with shame, but who is he that has? where is he to be found? *Numquid apud Parthes Armeniesve latet?*¹

I would not by this argue myself comparatively studious, for such a way is odious to all, but really Sir one of the greatest obstructions to my study has been your continual chiding of me. A man should sit to read a book as free from cares as from prejudice, for as the one biases the judgment, so the other distracts the thoughts. The concern I have always had upon me upon your account has made me sit in my study not a few hours every day without being able to set anything cheerfully, for the hopes of pleasing has always seemed to me a more generous engagement and a nobler motive to undertake a thing than the fear of the contrary. The worst of men has sometime or other deserved a good character, and I think my circumstances very bad when I have such overseers as only take notice of the worst of my actions.

I can boldly defy them all to charge me with any irregularity besides sometimes missing prayers and very rarely coming in at the gates, not once in a fortnight I am positive. The best of the society fall under the same faults and them, that I guess are so careful of others and ought to set a good example, the most of all.

My expenses I must confess are more than are absolute necessary, but if temperance as all other virtues lie betwixt two extremes, I think I have not been of late very faulty that way. I have done like him who by doubting found out a first truth and by my own folly that way begin to grow wise, for according to the learned one step to knowledge is to know your own ignorance, and he that knows he knows nothing knows a great deal. I will retrench them for the future, but desire

¹ *Numquid apud Parthes, etc.* 'Doth [he] perchance hide himself among the Scythians or the Armenians?' An apt play upon Martial (*Epigr.* V, 58), where the subject is 'tomorrow'.

you not to judge of my studies by them, for a man cannot study as he ought to do all day without some refreshment in the evening : 'tis that which makes him return fresh to them which otherwise cloy him.

I humbly submit all this to your consideration, not any ways designing to follow my own counsels any more than you approve of them, and so wholly resigning myself to you, I rest

Your very loving brother

G. S.

I thank you heartily for the fishing rod, though I am sorry I can't be trusted with it. 'Tis not an edged tool though if it were I hope I am past cutting my fingers.

Dryden versus Nuisance

JOHN DRYDEN TO MRS STEWARD

Tichmarsh, Northants,
23 November, 1698

. . . After I had lost the happiness of your company, I could expect no other than the loss of my health, which followed according to the proverb that misfortunes seldom come alone. I had no woman to visit but the parson's wife ; and she, who was intended by nature as a helpmeet for a deaf husband, was somewhat of the loudest for my conversation, and for other things, I will say no more than that she is just your contrary and an epitome of her own country.

My journey to London was yet more unpleasant than my abode at Tichmarsh, for the coach was crowded up with an old woman fatter than any of my hostesses on the road. Her weight made the horses travel very heavily. But, to give them a breathing time, she would often stop us, and plead some necessity of nature, and tell us we were all flesh and blood. But she did this so frequently that at last we conspired against her and, that she might not be inconvenienced by staying in the coach, turned her out in a very dirty place where she was to wade up to the ankles before she could reach the next hedge. When I was rid of her, I came sick home and kept my house for three weeks together. . . .

The Proposal

SIR RICHARD STEELE¹ TO MARY SCURLOCK

9 August, 1707

Madam,—I writ you on Saturday, by Mrs. Warren, and give you this trouble to urge the same request I made then ; which was, that I may be admitted to wait upon you. I should be very far from desiring this if it were a transgression of the most severe rules to allow it. I know you are very much above the little arts which are frequent in your sex, of giving unnecessary torment to their admirers ; I therefore hope you will do so much justice to the generous passion I have for you, as to let me have an opportunity of acquainting you upon what motives I pretend to your good opinion. I shall not trouble you with my sentiments till I know how they will be received ; and as I know no reason why the difference of sex should make our language to each other differ from the ordinary rules of right reason, I shall affect plainness and sincerity in my discourse to you, as much as other lovers do perplexity and rapture. Instead of saying 'I shall die for you', I profess I should be glad to lead my life with you. You are as beautiful, as witty, as prudent, and as good-humoured as any woman breathing ; but, I must confess to you, I regard all these excellences as you will please to direct them for my happiness or misery. With me, madam, the only lasting motive to love, is the hope of its becoming mutual. I beg of you to let Mrs. Warren send me word when I may attend you. I promise you, I will talk of nothing but indifferent things ; though, at the same time, I know not how I shall approach you in the tender moment of first seeing you after this declaration which has been made by, madam,

Your most obedient and most faithful humble servant.

¹ The impulsive heart of Addison's generous partner makes its own manly, if not very tidy memorial in his family correspondence, in which he shows his love, his irregularities, his tenderness for his children and his gallant determinations to raise their fortunes. His adoration of his Prue evokes a sigh even in the notoriously unsentimental Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. 'I wish,' says she in a P.S. to her husband, 'you would learn of Mr Steele to write to your wife.' The date of this wish, 1714, is interesting, for it proves that Steele's fond ways were well known long before John Nichols edited his letters (1787). Indeed, the envied Mrs Steele was still alive. She became Lady Steele in 1716 and died two years later.

Male Distraction

TO THE SAME

St. James's Coffee House,
1 September, 1707

Madam,—It is the hardest thing in the world to be in love, and yet attend to business. As for me, all who speak to me to find out, and I must lock myself up, or other people will do it for me.

A gentleman asked me this morning, 'What news from Lisbon?' and I answered, 'She is exquisitely handsome.' Another desired to know 'when I had been last at Hampton Court?' I replied, 'It will be on Tuesday come se'nnight.' Pr'ythee allow me at least to kiss your hand before that day, that my mind may be in some composure. O love!

*A thousand torments dwell about thee,
Yet who would live, to live without thee?*

Methinks I could write a volume to you ; but all the language on earth would fail in saying how much, and with what disinterested passion, I am ever yours.

Walnuts and the Heart

RICHARD STEELE TO MRS STEELE

Five in the Evening, 19 September, 1708

Dear Prue,

I send you seven pennyworth of walnuts at five a penny, which is the greatest proof I can give you at present of my being, with my whole heart, yours.

The little horse comes back with the boy, who returns with him for me on Wednesday evening ; in the mean time, I believe, it will be well that he runs in the Park.

I am Mrs. Binn's servant.

Since I writ this I came to the place where the boy was order'd with the horses ; and, not finding him, sent this bearer, lest you should be in fears, the boy not returning.

P.S. There are but 29 walnuts ~~but~~

RICHARD STEELE TO MRS STEELE

30 September, 1710

From the Pier One in the Morning

Dear Prue,

I am very sleepy and tir'd, but could not think of closing my eyes till I had told you I am, dearest creature, yr most affectionate and faithful husband.

RICHARD STEELE TO MRS STEELE

18 November, 1712

Dear Prue,

I am come from a committee where I have [been] chairman, and drunk too much. I have the headache, and should be glad you would come to me in good-humour, which would always banish any uneasiness of temper from, dear Prue, your fond fool of a husband.

Fidele

RICHARD STEELE TO MRS STEELE

5 February, 1716-17

Dear Prue,

I write without having any thing new to say. I am going to be very easy, God be thanked, in my affairs ; to throw off all hangers-on, put my debts in a regular way of payment, which I cannot immediately discharge ; and try to behave myself with the utmost circumspection and prudence in all the duties of life, especially of being, dear Prue, your most obliged husband, and obedient, humble servant.

16 February, 1716-17

Sober or not, I am ever yours.

' His Face Sweetened '

RICHARD STEELE TO MRS STEELE

22 May, 1717

Dear Prue,

• Your son is now with me very merry in rags, which condition I am going to better, for he shall have new things immediately. He is ex-

tremely pretty, and has his face sweeten'd with something of the Venus his mother, which is no small delight to the Vulcan who begot him. Ever yours.

‘ *Three Best Friends* ’
(*Bess was Eight and Moll four*)

RICHARD STEELE TO MRS STEELE

20 September, 1717

... My dear Wife, preserve yourself for him that sincerely loves you, and to be an example to your little ones of religion and virtue. If it pleases God to bless us together with life and health, we will live a life of piety and cheerful virtue. Your daughter Bess gives her duty to you, and she says she will be your comfort, but she is very sorry you are afflicted with the gout. The brats, my girls, stand on each side the table ; and Molly says, that what I am writing now is about her new coat. Bess is with me till she has new cloaths. Miss Moll has taken upon her to hold the sand-box, and is so impertinent in her office, that I cannot write more. But you are to take this letter as from your three best friends,

BESS, MOLL, AND THEIR FATHER

Moll bids me let you know that she fell down just now, and did not hurt herself.

Something to Please Us

RICHARD STEELE TO ELIZABETH STEELE (NOW ELEVEN)

7 October, 1720

My dear Child,

I have yours of the 30th of the last month ; and, from your diligence and improvement, conceive hopes of your being as excellent a person as your mother : you have great opportunities of becoming such a one, by observing the maxims and sentiments of her bosom friend, Mrs. Keck, who has condescended to take upon her the care of you and your sister, for which you are always to pay her the same respect as if she were your mother.

I have observed that your sister has, for the first time, written the *initial* or first letters of her name. Tell her I am highly delighted to see

her subscription in such fair letters, and how many fine things those two letters stand for when she writes them. M. S. is *milk* and *sugar*, *mirth* and *safety*, *music* and *songs*, *meat* and *sauce*, as well as *Molly* and *Spot*, and *Mary* and *Steele*.

You see I take pleasure in conversing with you, by prattling any thing to divert you. I hope we shall next month have an happy meeting, when I will entertain you with something that may be as good for the father as the children, and consequently please us. I am, Madam, your affectionate father, and most humble servant.

The Great Dean in the Babble of Intimacy

JONATHAN SWIFT TO STELLA¹

London, 20 January 1711,

I went today with my new wig, o hoao, to visit Lady Worsley, whom I had not seen before, although she was near a month in town. Then I walked in the Park to find Mr. Ford, whom I had promised to meet, and coming down the Mall, who should come toward me but Patrick, and gives me five letters out of his pocket. I read the super-
scription of the first, Pshoh, said I ; of the second, pshoh again ; of the third, pshah, pshah, pshah, pshah ; of the fourth, a gad, a gad, a gad, I'm in a rage ; of the fifth and last, O hoooa ; ay marry, this is something, this is our MD ;² so truly we opened it, I think immediately,

¹ With the correspondence of Swift and his friends we come to the great age of letter-writing. The present little selection is made from eighteen volumes, edited by Sir Walter Scott. One example is given of the 'baby language' that Swift wrote to Stella, but in the main his letters show, even in their familiarity, the ease and strength of his prose style. Dorothy Osborne (p. 4) and other good judges—see Introduction—have warned us that we should write our letters as we speak ; but the Eighteenth Century is the age of supreme prose confidence, and one can hardly doubt that the conversation of great people in such an era of urban pride had something of the clarity of their writing. They would have been far less surprised than poor old M. Jourdain to discover that they had been talking prose all their lives. Indeed the amiable American ladies whom Dr Johnson met in the Oxford coach, said : 'How he talks!—Every sentence is an essay.'

Stella : the strange story of this girl, Esther Johnson, whom Swift met in Sir William Temple's household, and of her chaperone, Mrs Dingley, must be sought in Swift's biographers. Certain it is that he was buried next to her, unlikely that he was married to her. The letter is here for its strange style.

² The sign means : Stella-cum-Dingley.

and it began the most impudently in the world, thus : Dear Presto,¹ we are even thus far. Now we are even, quoth Stephen, when he gave his wife six blows for one. I received your ninth four days after I had sent my thirteenth. But I will reckon with you anon about that, young women. Why did not you recant at the end of your letter when you got your eleventh? tell me that, huzzies base, were we even then, were we, sirrah? but I will not answer your letter now, I'll keep it for another time. We had a great deal of snow today, and 'tis terrible cold. . . .

21. *Morning.* It has snowed terribly all night, and is vengeance cold. I am not yet up, but cannot write long ; my hands will freeze. Is there a good fire, Patrick? Yes, sir. Then I'll rise ; come, take away the candle. You must know, I write on the dark side of my bed-chamber, and am forced to have a candle till I rise, for the bed stands between me and the window, and I keep the curtains shut this cold weather. So pray let me rise ; and Patrick, here, take away the candle. *At night.* We are now here in high frost and snow ; the largest fire can hardly keep us warm. It is very ugly walking ; a baker's boy broke his thigh yesterday. I walk slow, make short steps, and never tread on my heel. It is a good proverb the Devonshire people have :

*Walk fast in snow,
In frost walk slow,
And still as you go,
Tread on your toe :
When frost and snow are both together,
Sit by the fire and spare shoe leather. . . .*

22. *Morning.* Starving, starving, uth, uth, uth, uth, uth. Do not you remember I used to come into your chamber, and turn Stella out of her chair, and rake up the fire in a cold morning, and cry uth, uth, uth etc? O faith, I must rise, my hand is so cold I can write no more.

¹ Their nickname for Swift was known outside this intimate circle, as Johnson mentions to Mrs Thrale (18.5.1769) 'letters like Presto's',—and that cannot be confused with the name of Mrs Thrale's dog.

The Discarded Statesman Finds Comfort

LORD BOLINGBROKE¹ TO JONATHAN SWIFT

The little incivilities I have met with from opposite sets of people, have been so far from rendering me violent or sour to any, that I think myself obliged to them all : some have cured me of my fears, by showing me how impotent the malice of the world is ; others have cured me of my hopes, by showing how precarious popular friendships are ; all have cured me of surprise. In driving me out of party, they have driven me out of cursed company ; and in stripping me of titles, and rank, and estate, and such trinkets, which every man that will may spare, they have given me that which no man can be happy without.

Reflection and habit have rendered the world so indifferent to me, that I am neither afflicted nor rejoiced, angry nor pleased, at what happens in it, any further than personal friendships interest me in the affairs of it, and this principle extends my cares but a little way. Perfect tranquillity is the general tenor of my life : good digestions, serene weather, and some other mechanic springs, wind me above it now and then, but I never fall below it ; I am sometimes gay, but I am never sad ; I have gained new friends, and have lost some old ones ; my acquisitions of this kind give me a good deal of pleasure, because they have not been made lightly. I know no vows so solemn as those of friendship, and therefore a pretty long noviciate of acquaintance should methinks precede them ; my losses of this kind give me but little trouble ; I contributed nothing to them ; and a friend who breaks with me unjustly, is not worth preserving. As soon as I leave this town (which will be in a few days) I shall fall back into that course of life, which keeps knaves and fools² at a great distance from me : I have an aversion to them both, but in the ordinary course of life, I think I can bear the sensible knave better than the fool : One must, indeed, with

¹ Henry St John, first Viscount Bolingbroke, lost his position of Secretary of State and his peerage (attainted on accession of George I) and he fled to France, where ill-success awaited his service of the Old Pretender. He was pardoned in 1723, and his retirement brought him great repute as a writer.

² *Knaves and Fools* : an interesting example of the mingling of thoughts among close friends is seen in the definite echo of this passage in a letter to Pope from Swift—a sufficiently original person! 'I can likewise tolerate knaves much better than fools, because their knavery does me no hurt in the commerce I have met with them, which however I own is more dangerous though not so troublesome as that of fools.' (20.9.1723.)

the former, be in some or other of the attitudes of those wooden men whom I have seen before a sword-cutler's shop in Germany ; but even in these constrained postures, the witty rascal will divert me : and he that diverts me does me a great deal of good, and lays me under an obligation to him, which I am not obliged to pay in another coin : the fool obliges me to be almost as much upon my guard as the knave, and he makes me no amends ; he numbs me like the torpor, or he teases me like the fly. This is the picture of an old friend, and more like him than that will be which you once asked, and which he will send you, if you continue still to desire it.—Adieu, dear Swift, with all thy faults I love thee entirely ; make an effort, and love me on with all mine.

Put Off the Robe

LORD BOLINGBROKE TO JONATHAN SWIFT
(P.S. to a letter from Pope)

12 April, 1730

I did not take the pen out of Pope's hands, I protest to you. But since he will not fill the remainder of the page, I think I may without offence. I seek no epistolary fame, but am a good deal pleased to think, that it will be known hereafter that you and I lived in the most friendly intimacy together. Pliny writ his letters for the public, so did Seneca, so did Balsac, Voiture, etc. Tully did not, and therefore these give us more pleasure than any which have come down to us from antiquity. When we read them, we pry into a secret which was intended to be kept from us. That is a pleasure. We see Cato, and Brutus, and Pompey, and others, such as they really were, and not such as the gaping multitude of their own age took them to be, or as historians and poets have represented them to ours. That is another pleasure. I remember to have seen a procession at Aix la Chapelle, wherein an image of Charlemagne is carried on the shoulders of a man, who is hid by the long robe of the imperial saint. Follow him into the vestry, you see the bearer slip from under the robe, and the gigantic figure dwindles into an image of the ordinary size, and is set by among other lumber.

*Candour by Way of Comfort*¹

JONATHAN SWIFT TO DR SHERIDAN

Quilca, 11 September, 1725

If you are indeed a discarded courtier, you have reason to complain, but none at all to wonder ; you are too young for many experiences to fall in your way, yet you have read enough to make you know the nature of man. It is safer for a man's interest to blaspheme God, than to be of a party out of power, or even to be thought so. And since the last was the case, how could you imagine that all mouths would not be open when you were received, and in some manner preferred by the government, though in a poor way? I tell you there is hardly a whig in Ireland, who would allow a potatoe and butter-milk to a reputed tory. Neither is there anything in your countrymen upon this article more than what is common in all other nations, only *quoad magis et minus*. Too much advertency is not your talent, or else you had fled from that text, as from a rock. For as Don Quixote said to Sancho, what business had you to speak of a halter in a family where one if it was hanged? And your innocence is a protection, that wise men are ashamed to rely on, further than with God. It is indeed against common sense to think, that you should choose such a time, when you had received a favour from the lord-licutenant, and had reason to expect more, to discover your disloyalty in the pulpit. But what will that avail? Therefore sit down and be quiet, and mind your business as you should do, and contract your friendships, and expect no more from man than such an animal is capable of, and you will every day find my description of Yahoos more resembling. You should think and deal with every man as a villain, without calling him so, or flying from him, or valuing him less. This is an old true lesson. You believe, every one will acquit you of any regard to temporal interest : and how came you

¹ Dr Sheridan had just been made chaplain to the viceregal court only to be dismissed at once for an unhappy blunder : the forgetful man went in a hurry to officiate for Archdeacon Russell of Cork and, snatching up an old sermon, found himself preaching, on the anniversary of the Hanoverian accession, ' Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof '.

Swift had recommended Sheridan to the Lord Lieutenant, in a characteristic passage (11.4.25) ' He is a man of good sense, modesty, and virtue. His greatest fault is a wife and four children, for which there is no excuse, but that a wife is thought necessary to a schoolmaster.'

to claim an exception from all mankind? I believe you value your temporal interest as much as any body, but you have not the arts of pursuing it. You are mistaken. Domestic evils are no more within a man than others ; and he who cannot bear up against the first, will sink under the second, and in my conscience I believe this is your case ; for being of a weak constitution, in an employment precarious and tiresome, loaden with children, a man of intent and abstracted thinking, enslaved by mathematics, and complaint of the world, this new weight of a party malice had struck you down, like a feather on a horse's back already loaden as far as he is able to bear. . . .

You think all the world has now nothing to do but to pull Mr. Sheridan down, whereas it is nothing but a slap in your turn, and away. Lord Oxford said once to me on an occasion, these fools, because they hear a noise about their ears of their own making, think the whole world is full of it. When I come to town, we will change all this scene, and act like men of the world.

A Turbulent Caller

JONATHAN SWIFT TO THE DUKE OF DORSET

January, 1733-4

On Monday last week, toward evening, there came to the deanery one Mr. Bettesworth ; who, being told by the servants that I was gone to a friend's house, went thither to inquire for me, and was admitted into the street parlour. I left my company in the back-room, and went to him. He began with asking me, ' Whether I were the author of certain verses, wherein he was reflected on.' The singularity of the man in his countenance, manner, action, style and tone of voice, made me call to mind that I had once seen him, about two or three years ago, at Mr. Ludlow's country house. But I could not recollect his name ; and of what calling he might be I had never heard. I therefore desired to know who and what he was? said, ' I heard of some such verses, but knew no more.' He then signified to me, ' That he was a serjeant at law, and a member of parliament.' After which, he repeated the lines that concerned him with great emphasis ; said, ' I was mistaken in one thing ; for he assured me he was no booby ; but owned himself to be a coxcomb.' However, that being a point of controversy wherein I had no concern, I let it drop. As to the verses, he insisted, ' That by his taste, and skill in poetry, he was as sure I writ them as if

he had seen them fall from my pen.' But I found the chief weight of his argument lay upon two words that rhymed to his name, which he knew could come from none but me. He then told me, 'That, since I would not own the verses, and that since he could not get satisfaction by any course of law, he would get it by his pen, and show the world what a man I was.' When he began to grow over-warm and eloquent, I called in the gentleman of the house, from the room adjoining ; and the serjeant, going on with less turbulence, went away. He had a footman in the hall during all his talk, who was to have opened the door for one or more fellows, as he has since reported : and likewise, that he had a sharp knife in his pocket, ready to stab or maim me. But the master and mistress of the house, who knew his character, and could hear every word from the room they were in, had prepared a sufficient defence in such a case, as they afterward told me. He has since related, to five hundred persons of all ranks, above five hundred falsehoods of this conversation, of my fears and his own brutalities, against all probability as well as fact ; and some of them, as I have been assured, even in the presence of your grace. His meanings and his movements were indeed peevish enough, but his words were not. He threatened me with nothing but his pen, yet owned he had no pretence to wit. And indeed I am heartily glad, for his own sake, that he proceeded no farther ; for, the least uproar would have called his nearest neighbours, first to my assistance, and next, to the manifest danger of his life : and I would not willingly have even a dog killed upon my account. Ever since, he has amused himself with declaring, in all companies, especially before bishops, and lords, and members of parliament, his resolutions for vengeance, and the several manners by which he will put it in execution.

'Twill Get You a Stomach

DR SHERIDAN TO JONATHAN SWIFT

Cavan, 10 June, 1735

I wish with all my soul you were here before my chickens and ducks outgrow the proper season : as for the geese, they have ceased to be green, and are now old enough to see the world, which they do as far as our river will let them sail commodiously.

Our mutton is the best I ever tasted, so is our beef, our trouts, our pheasants, particularly the eels. Dear Sir, I am almost persuaded that

the journey hither will not only remove your disorder, but the good air will also get you a stomach, and of consequence new flesh, and good health. Your little starts to the country from Dublin, only make your lungs play quicker, to draw in more of your city poison ; whereas being here with me in the midst of Arabia Felix, you draw in nothing but balsamic aromatic air, the meanest odour of which is that of our bean blossom and lily of the valley. Every one swears who looks on my face, that I am grown already ten years younger, and this I am almost persuaded to believe, because I labour more than ever, drink less, see fewer company, and have abundantly more spirits.

I have almost finished a walk of half a mile for you, and now it is ready for a coat of coarse gravel ; for I cannot afford a rolling-stone ; so that my garden walks will require a strong pair of German shoes.

Hospitable Works and Gallows' Humour

DR SHERIDAN TO JONATHAN SWIFT

Cavan, 13 August, 1735

Dear Sir,

Because of some dropping young lads coming to me, and because it was impossible for me to get any money before the 23d of this month, I could not fix my vacation. Now I do. On Saturday se'n-night, the 23d, I set out for Dublin to bring you home : and so, without ifs, ands, and ors, get ready before our fields be stripped of all their gaiety. I thank God, I have every good thing in plenty but money ; and that, as affairs are likely to go, will not be my complaint a month longer. Belturbet fair will make me an emperor. I have all this town and six men of my own at work at this juncture, to make you a winter-walk by the river side. I have raised mountains of gravel, and diverted the river's course for that end—*Regis opus*, you will wonder and be delighted when you see it. Your works at Quilca are to be as much inferior to ours here, as a sugar-loaf to an Egyptian pyramid. We had a county of Armagh rogue, one Mackay, hanged yesterday : Griffith the player never made so merry an exit. He invited his audience the night before, with a promise of giving them such a speech from the gallows as they never heard : and indeed he made his words good ; for no man was ever merrier at a christening than he was upon the ladder.

When he mounted to his proper height, he turned his face to each side of the gallows and said, in cheerful manner, Hah, my friend, am

I come to you at last! Then turning to the people, Gentlemen, you need not stand so thick, for the farthest shall hear me as easily as the nearest. Upon this a fellow interrupted him, and asked him, Did he know anything of a gray mare which was stolen from him? Why, what if I should, would you pay for a mass for my soul? Ay, by G——, said the fellow, will I pay for seven. Why then, said the criminal, laughing, I know nothing of your mare. After this he entertained the company with two hours history of his villanies, in a loud unconcerned voice. At last he concluded with his humble service to one of the inhabitants of our town, desiring that he might give him a night's lodging, which was all he would trouble him for. He was not the least touched by any liquor; but soberly and intrepidly desired the hangman to do his office: and at last went off with a joke. Match me this with any of your Englishmen, if you can. I have no more news from Cavan, but that you have all their hearts, and mine among the rest, if it be worth any thing. My love and service to Mrs. Whiteway,¹ and all friends. I am, dear Sir,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

THOMAS SHERIDAN

' Into What Country We Shall Walk '

ALEXANDER POPE TO JONATHAN SWIFT ²

2 April, 1733

You say truly, that death is only terrible to us as it separates us from those we love, but I really think those have the worst of it who are left by us, if we are true friends. I have felt more (I fancy) in the loss of Mr Gay, than I shall suffer in the thought of going away myself into a state that can feel none of this sort of losses. I wished vehemently to have seen him in a condition of living independent, and to have lived

¹ Mrs Whiteway was a cousin of Swift's who came constantly after Stella's death, to read to him.

² It is good to remember steadfastness of affection in the inner circle of the great satirists, for we hear more often of the savage eccentricity of Swift or of Pope's mean vanity. They commanded noble friendships, to which the greater-hearted man in particular was faithful. Both were fond of Gay, and Pope's desire to see him independent had appeared in admonitions from Swift: 'You are yet too volatile, and any lady with a coach and six horses would carry you to Japan.' (19.3.1728/9)

in perfect indolence the rest of our days together, the two most idle, most innocent, undesigning poets of our age. I now as vehemently wish you and I might walk into the grave together, by as slow steps as you please, but contentedly and cheerfully : whether that can ever be, or in what country, I know no more than into what country we shall walk out of the grave. But it suffices me to know it will be exactly what region or state our Maker appoints, and that whatever is, is right. . . .

Her Figure Abroad

THE DUCHESS OF QUEENSBURY¹ TO JONATHAN SWIFT

Amesbury, 10 November, 1733

Dear Sir,

I have only staid to give time for my letter's getting to you. There is some satisfaction in sitting down to write, now that I am something less in your debt ; I mean by way of letter. To speak seriously, I must love contradiction more than ever woman did, if I did not obey your commands ; for I do sincerely take great pleasure in conversing with you. If you have heard of my figure abroad, it is no more than I have done on both sides of my ears (as the saying is) : for I did not cut and curl my hair like a sheep's head, or wear one of their trolloping sacks : and by so not doing, I did give some offence.²

¹ Swift's friendship with the redoubtable Duchess grew out of correspondence through Gay, who lived at Amesbury under generous patronage. Indeed when Gay's opera *Polly*, successor to the famous *Beggar's Opera*, gave offence to the court, the Duchess retorted in an extraordinarily high-spirited letter to the King and Queen, copies of which, according to Dodington, were freely circulated. It contained assurance :

'That the Duchess of Queensbury is surprized and well pleased, that the King has given her so agreeable a command as to stay from Court, where she never came for diversion, but to bestow a great civility upon the King and Queen.'

'She hopes, by such an unprecedented order as this, that the King will see as few as he wishes at his court, particularly such as dare to think, or speak truth.'

² The remarks of the Duchess, in her first paragraph are due to her flat refusal to depart from the fashion of her youth. She scorned such changes as mere stratagems of sex ; and Scott quotes a poetical compliment from Wm. Whitehead to her in this connexion :

We have seen many very fine towns, and travelled through good roads, and pleasant countries. I like Flanders in particular, because it is the likeliest to England. The inns were very unlike those at home, being much cleaner and better served ; so that here I could not maintain my partiality with common justice. As to the civilizing any of that nation, it would employ more ill spent time fruitlessly than any one has to spare : they are the only people I ever saw that were quite without a genius to be civil when they had a mind to be so. Will you eat? Will you play at cards? are literally the tip-top well-bred phrases in use. The French people we met are quite of another turn, polite and easy ; one is the natural consequence of the other, though a secret that few have discovered. . . . Travelling agrees with me, and makes me good humoured. At home I am generally more nice than wise, but on the road nothing comes amiss. At Calais we were windbound four or five days, and I was very well contented : when the wind changed, I was delighted to go. . . . I tell you, that I do not use exercise ; designedly, never eat or drink what can disagree with me, but am no more certain of my stomach than of my mind ; at some times proof against any thing, and at other times too easily shocked ; but time and care can certainly make a strong defence. . . .

I am come almost to the end of my paper before I have half done with you. It was a rule, I remember, with poor Mr. Gay and me, never to exceed three pages. I long to hear from you, that I may have an excuse to write again ; for I doubt it would be carrying the joke too far to trouble you too often. *Adieu*, dear sir, health and happiness attend you ever.

I fear I have written so very ill, that I am quite unintelligible. His grace is very much yours.

*Your Grace will contradict in part
Your own assertion and my song,
Whose beauty, undisguised by art,
Has charmed so much and charmed so long.*

The Duchess appears in the Mary Wortley Montagu letter (p. 55) in characteristic enterprise.

*The Testimonial*¹

Deanery-house, 9 January, 1739-40

Whereas the bearer served me the space of one year, during which time he was an idler and drunkard, I then discharged him as such ; but how far his having been five years at sea may have mended his manners, I leave to the penetration of those who may hereafter choose to employ him.

SWIFT

Vivacious Servant

A. G. TO HER FRIEND MARTHA AT CALWICH²

August, 1745

Indeed my good friend Martha, it has been a deadly while I have taken to answer your kind letter, but what can a body do with one eye, and that a very bad one. Moreover, my hand shakes like any aspen leaf, and I have not been well all summer. I have a pain in my shoulder on one side, and a pain in my elbow on the other ; much pain and very lame of my knees, and ankles ; when I walk, it is like an elephant, without bending a joint. Oh how I grunt and groan night and day ! I will take my oath I would rather be an otter than an old woman ; but you do not know what it is to be old ! You are capering about in your fine cardinals,³ and things, like a girl of twenty. I suppose you are about getting a good husband. I was told so, and much good may it do you, if he gives you a hearty thrashing now and then. I wish you would tell me who he is ; write me word what his name is. But I hope this affair do not make you forget the dear pigs, and turkeys, and geese and

¹ The story behind this terse 'testimonial' throws a light upon the times as well as on the character of Swift and the regard in which his friend held him. The man had been instantly dismissed for his rude interception, overheard by Swift, of a poor old woman petitioner. When after five years he extracted this grim 'discharge' he went to London and was accepted by Pope, whom he served for the rest of the poet's life.

² Apparently nothing is known of the lively 'A. G.'

³ Ogilvie says cloaks of scarlet cloth, cardinal fashion, were much worn in the early eighteenth century and that they were later usually black, richly laced.

ducks ; send me word if they be in good heart and thriving. And what is master doing? Is he smothered amongst the lime and bricks? or has he got his work done, and laid himself down upon the gazy hill,¹ to take breath a little? This furious hot weather—I never felt such in my life. Tell him, that is, if he have outlived it, that I have thought forty times to come to Calwich, and live in the river amongst the otters, and lie tightly with them and try whether they or I should eat the most carps ; and I believe I should have come, if a thought had not changed in my head, that there might come at once a hundred about me, and eat me up, instead of a perch. You know I am a little slimikin thing, not unlike a perch or an eel, both which they like, and might easily mistake and pick my bones in a moment. . . . Well, I wish you would let me know what master is doing. Has he finished his house, done all he has to do, and got rid of his workmen? Surely, I thought, he would have been in London before now, and have got a new gown on purpose, thinking to see all the prime youth of Staffordshire reviewed in Hyde Park, with Colonel Granville at the head of them—such a day! So I went ; but when I found it was the Norfolk Militia, how was I mortified, though they were fine men, and very fine officers! But what did I care for them? I wanted to have seen master! and now they tell me your militia are not yet raised. Good luck! good luck! What is it you mean to be so doul?² I really believe in my heart master do not care if the French comes and eat us all up alive. Is there not flat boats—I know not how many thousands—ready to come every day? and when they once set out they will be with us as quick as a swallow can fly, almost ; and when they land we have nobody to fight them, because you *will not raise* your militia. For my part I dare not go to the Thames, for fear they should be coming ; and if I see one of our own boats laden with *carrots*, I am ready to drop down, thinking it one of the French. I have not one word of news, but that it is grown cooler to my great joy.

¹ Dialect dictionary gives 'gazy' as 'public' (Hants.) ; but 'doul' is from Yorkshire, and one wonders whether there is a lost word kin to Fr. *gazon*, 'grass'.

² Dialect word for 'depressed'.

‘ *I Never Scream* ’

JOHN WESLEY TO JOHN KING, ONE OF HIS PREACHERS IN AMERICA

Near Leeds, 28 July, 1775

My dear Brother,

Always take advice or reproof as a favour : it is the surest mark of love.

I advised you once, and you took it as an affront ; nevertheless I will do it once more.

Scream no more, at the peril of your soul. God now warns you by me, whom He has set over you.

Speak as earnestly as you can, but do not scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice. It is said of our Lord, ‘ He shall not *cry* ’ ; the word properly means, He shall not *scream*. Herein, be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. I often speak loud, often vehemently, but I never scream, I never strain myself. I dare not, I know it would be a sin against God and my own soul. Perhaps one reason why that good man, Thomas Walsh, yea, and John Manners too, were in such grievous darkness before they died, was, because they shortened their own lives.

O John, pray for an advisable and teachable temper ! By nature you are very far from it : you are stubborn and headstrong. Your last letter was written in a very wrong spirit. If you cannot take advice from others, surely you might take it from your affectionate brother.

SAMUEL JOHNSON TO LORD CHESTERFIELD¹

7 February, 1755

My Lord,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of *The World*, that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public,

¹ The famous Chesterfield letter, indispensable for its courage and dignity in any English collection, has a studied completeness that must have shaken the oracle of worldly wisdom. The extract that follows, to his friend Burney, reveals the humorous lonely pride with which Johnson was prepared to endure misprision of his work. Chesterfield’s own famous letters are wonderfully smooth in composition, but they have nothing of the lovable high spirits that can grace sophistication, as in Walpole. Chesterfield affected to be interested

were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre* ;—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending ; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could ; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door ; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help ? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind ; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it ; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it ; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

in the style of the letter from Johnson—‘ This man has great powers ’—but his ‘ cultus of the imperturbable ’, as Austin Dobson has called it, seems hollow to the modern reader, who is apt to sympathize with the loyal outburst from Boswell that follows in the *Life*.

‘ That Lord Chesterfield must have been mortified by the lofty contempt, and polite, yet keen, satire with which Johnson exhibited him to himself in this letter, it is impossible to doubt. He, however, with that glossy duplicity which was his constant study, affected to be quite unconcerned.’

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less ; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble,
Most obedient servant,

SAM. JOHNSON

Good-will Not Abounding

SAMUEL JOHNSON TO MR BURNEY

Gough Square, 24 December, 1757

... I remember with great pleasure your commendation of my *Dictionary*. Your praise was welcome, not only because I believe it was sincere, but because praise has been very scarce. A man of your candour will be surprised when I tell you that among all my acquaintance there were only two who, upon the publication of my book, did not endeavour to depress me with threats of censure from the public, or with objections learned from those who had learned them from my own preface. Yours is the only letter of good-will that I have received ; though, indeed, I am promised something of that sort from Sweden. . .

EXTRACTS FROM A LONG LETTER FROM SAMUEL JOHNSON TO
MRS THRALE

Skie, 21 September, 1773

Dearest Madam,

I am so vexed at the necessity of sending yesterday so short a letter, that I purpose to get a long letter beforehand by writing something every day, which I may the more easily do, as a cold makes me now too deaf to take the usual pleasure in conversation. . . .

He is Offered an Island—Highland Characters

Macleod has offered me an island ; if it were not too far off I should hardly refuse it : my island would be pleasanter than Brighthelmstone,

if you and my master could come to it ; but I cannot think it pleasant to live quite alone.

*Oblitusque meorum, obliviscendus et illis.*¹

That I should be elated by the dominion of an island to forgetfulness of my friends at Streatham I cannot believe, and I hope never to deserve that they should be willing to forget me. . . .

The Highland girl made tea, and looked and talked not inelegantly ; her father was by no means an ignorant or a weak man ; there were books in the cottage, among which were some volumes of Prideaux's *Connection* : ² this man's conversation we were glad of while we staid. He had been *out*, as they call it, in forty-five, and still retained his old opinions. He was going to America, because his rent was raised beyond what he thought himself able to pay.

At night our beds were made, but we had some difficulty in persuading ourselves to lie down in them, though we had put on our own sheets ; at last we ventured, and I slept very soundly in the vale of Glenmorrison amidst the rocks and mountains. Next morning our landlord liked us so well, that he walked some miles with us for our company, through a country so wild and barren that the proprietor does not, with all his pressure upon his tenants, raise more than four hundred pounds a-year for near one hundred square miles, or sixty thousand acres. He let us know that he had forty head of black cattle, an hundred goats, and an hundred sheep, upon a farm that he remembered let at five pounds a-year, but for which he now paid twenty. He told us some stories of their march into England. At last he left us, and we went forward, winding among mountains, sometimes green and sometimes naked, commonly so steep as not easily to be climbed by the greatest vigour and activity : our way was often crossed by little rivulets, and we were entertained with small streams trickling from the rocks, which after heavy rains must be tremendous torrents.

About noon we came to a small glen, so they call a valley, which compared with other places appeared rich and fertile ; here our guides desired us to stop, that the horses might graze, for the journey was very laborious, and no more grass would be found. We made no

¹ *Oblitusque* . . . ' Forgetful of my friends and fading from their thoughts, Horace, *Epist.*, I, xi. 9.

² Prideaux's *Connection*, apparently a reference to Bishop Prideaux's *Tabulae ad Grammaticam Graecam introductoriae*, for Boswell observes that the landlord had learned his grammar, and Johnson, ' A man is better for that as long as he lives '.

difficulty of compliance, and I sat down to take notes on a green bank, with a small stream running at my feet, in the midst of savage solitude, with mountains before me, and on either hand covered with heath. I looked around me, and wondered that I was not more affected, but the mind is not at all times equally ready to be put in motion.

The Old Hospitality

We had been told that nothing gratified the Highlanders so much as snuff and tobacco, and had accordingly stored ourselves with both at Fort Augustus. Boswell opened his treasure, and gave them each a piece of tobacco roll. We had more bread than we could eat for the present, and were more liberal than provident. Boswell cut it in slices, and gave them an opportunity of tasting wheaten bread for the first time. I then got some halfpence for a shilling, and made up the deficiencies of Boswell's distribution, who had given some money among the children. We then directed that the mistress of the stone house should be asked what we must pay her : she, who perhaps had never before sold anything but cattle, knew not, I believe, well what to ask, and referred herself to us : we obliged her to make some demand, and one of the Highlanders settled the account with her at a shilling. One of the men advised her, with the cunning that clowns never can be without, to ask more ; but she said that a shilling was enough. We gave her half a crown, and she offered part of it again.

' The Confederacy with Which We Were Threatened '

Towards night we came to a very formidable hill called Rattiken,¹ which we climbed with more difficulty than we had yet experienced, and at last came to Glenelg, a place on the sea-side opposite to Skie. We were by this time weary and disgusted, nor was our humour much mended by our inn, which, though it was built of lime and slate, the Highlander's description of a house which he thinks magnificent, had neither wine, bread, eggs, nor any thing that we could eat or drink. When we were taken up stairs, a dirty fellow bounced out of the bed where one of us was to lie.² Boswell blustered, but nothing could be

¹ Rattachan.

² *A dirty fellow bounced out of the bed where one of us was to lie.* In his brilliant, coarse picture of Johnson, Macaulay contrasts the excellent simplicity of the letter with the later version in the *Journey to the Hebrides* : ' Out of one of the beds on which we were to repose started up, at our entrance, a man black

got. At last a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who heard of our arrival, sent us rum and white sugar. Boswell was now provided for in part, and the landlord prepared some mutton chops, which we could not eat, and killed two hens, of which Boswell made his servant broil a limb, with what effect I know not. We had a lemon and a piece of bread, which supplied me with my supper. When the repast was ended, we began to deliberate upon bed ; Mrs. Boswell had warned us that we should *catch something*, and had given us *sheets* for our *security*, for — and —, she said, came back from Skie, so scratching themselves. I thought sheets a slender defence against the confederacy with which we were threatened, and by this time our Highlanders had found a place where they could get some hay : I ordered hay to be laid thick upon the bed, and slept upon it in my great coat : Boswell laid sheets upon his bed, and reposed in linen like a gentleman. The horses were turned out to grass, with a man to watch them. The hill Rattiken and the inn at Glenelg were the only things of which we, or travellers yet more delicate, could find any pretensions to complain.

A Contented Traveller

The use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are. Here are mountains which I should once have climbed, but to climb steeps is now very laborious, and to descend them dangerous ; and I am now content with knowing, that by scrambling up a rock, I shall only see other rocks, and a wider circuit of barren desolation.

*A Letter Preceding the Purchase of a Good Oak Stick*¹

SAMUEL JOHNSON TO MR JAMES MACPHERSON

January, 1775

Mr. James Macpherson.

I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel ; and what I cannot do for myself, the

as a Cyclops from the forge.' 'The expressions which came first to his tongue,' says Macaulay, 'were simple, energetic and picturesque. When he wrote for publication, he did his sentences out of English into Johnsonese.' But the Johnsonese of the letter to Chesterfield is beyond most authors. 'Confederacy,' is also Johnsonese, and no harm done.

¹ The threat from Macpherson followed upon Johnson's pronouncing his *Ossian* as spurious. Johnson's answer was published in the newspapers of the day.

law shall do for me. I hope I never shall be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture ; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your *Homer*, are not so formidable : and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard, not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

The Best of Judges

SAMUEL JOHNSON TO MRS THRALE

London, 27 July, 1780

And thus it is, Madam, that you serve me. After having kept me a whole week hoping and hoping, and wondering and wondering what could have stopped your hand from writing, comes a letter to tell me, that I suffer by my own fault. As if I might not correspond with my Queeney, and we might not tell one another our minds about politicks or morals, or anything else. Queeney and I are both steady, and may be trusted ; we are none of the giddy gabblers, we think before we speak.

I am afraid that I shall hardly find my way this summer into the country, though the number of my *Lives* now grows less. I will send you two little volumes in a few days.

As the workmen are still at Streatham, there is no likelihood of seeing you and my master in any short time ; but let my master be where he will so he be well. I am not, I believe, any fatter than when you saw me, and hope to keep corpulencé away ; for I am so light-some and so airy, and can so walk, you would talk of it if you were to see me. I do not always sleep well ; but I have no pain nor sickness in the night. Perhaps I only sleep ill because I am too long a-bed.¹

I dined yesterday at Sir Joshua's with Mrs. Cholmondely,² and she told me, I was the best critick in the world ; and I told her, that nobody in the world could judge like her of the merit of a critick.

On Sunday I was with Dr. Lawrence and his two sisters-in-law, to dine with Mr. G—— at Putney. The Doctor cannot hear in a coach

¹ *Too long abed* ; His friend Baretti makes the not very reverent note, 'That was true enough'.

² Mrs Cholmondely was sister to Peg Woffington the actress. Johnson found her vivacity attractive.

better than in a room, and it was but a dull day ; only I saw two crownbirds, paltry creatures, and a red curlew.

Every body is gone out of town, only I am left behind, and know not when I shall see either Naiad or Dryad ; however, it is as it has commonly been, I have no complaint to make but of myself. I have been idle, and *of idleness can come no goodness.*

Mrs. Williams was frighted from London as you were frighted from Bath. She is come back, as she thinks, better. Mrs. Desmoulins has a disorder resembling an asthma ; which I am for curing with calomel and jalap, but Mr. Levet treats it with antimonial wine. Mr. Levet keeps on his legs stout, and walks, I suppose, ten miles a-day.

I stick pretty well to diet, and desire my master may be told of it ; for no man said oftener than he, that *the less we eat the better.*

Against Borrowing

SAMUEL JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ

London, 28 March, 1782

. . . What we shall do in the summer, it is yet too early to consider. You want to know what you shall do now ; I do not think this time of bustle and confusion like to produce any advantage to you. Every man has those to reward and gratify who have contributed to his advancement. To come hither with such expectations at the expense of borrowed money, which, I find, you know not where to borrow, can hardly be considered prudent. I am sorry to find, what your solicitations seem to imply, that you have already gone the whole length of your credit. This is to set the quiet of your whole life at hazard. If you anticipate your inheritance, you can at last inherit nothing ; all that you receive must pay for the past. You must get a place, or pine in penury, with the empty name of a great estate. Poverty, my dear friend, is so great an evil, and pregnant with so much temptation, and so much misery, that I cannot but earnestly enjoin you to avoid it. Live on what you have ; live if you can on less ; do not borrow either for vanity or pleasure ; the vanity will end in shame, and the pleasure in regret : stay therefore at home, till you have saved money for your journey hither.

The *Beauties* of Johnson are said to have got money to the collector ; if *The Deformities* have the same success, I shall be still a more extensive benefactor.

The Great Man Masters his Horror of Death

SAMUEL JOHNSON TO MRS THRALE

19 June, 1783

On Monday the 16th I sat for my picture, and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and in a short time waked and sat up, as has been long my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head, which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute. I was alarmed, and prayed God, that however he might afflict my body, he would spare my understanding. This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good : I made them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties.

Soon after I perceived that I had suffered a paralytic stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death itself when it should come would excite less horror than seems now to attend it.

In order to rouse the vocal organs I took two drams. Wine has been celebrated for the production of eloquence. I put myself into violent motion, and I think repeated it ; but all was vain. I then went to bed, and, strange as it may seem, I think, slept. When I saw light, it was time to contrive what I should do. Though God stopped my speech he left me my hand ; I enjoyed a mercy which was not granted to my dear friend Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted. My first note was necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands.

I then wrote a card to Mr. Allen, that I might have a discreet friend at hand, to act as occasion should require. In penning this note I had some difficulty ; my hand, I know not how nor why, made wrong letters. I then wrote to Dr. Taylor to come to me, and bring Dr. Heberden, and I sent to Dr. Brocklesby, who is my neighbour. My physicians are very friendly and very disinterested and give me great hopes ; but you may imagine my situation. I have so far recovered my vocal powers, as to repeat the Lord's Prayer with no very imperfect articulation. My memory, I hope, yet remains as it was ; but such an attack produces solicitude for the safety of every faculty. . . .

I suppose you may wish to know how my disease is treated by the physicians. They put a blister upon my back, and two from my ear to my throat, one on a side. The blister on the back has done little, and those on the throat have not risen. I bullied and bounced, (it sticks to our last sand) and compelled the apothecary to make his salve according to Edinburgh Dispensatory, that it might adhere better. I have two on now of my own prescription. They likewise give me salt of hartshorn, which I take with no great confidence, but am satisfied that what can be done is done for me.

' See Her Eat '

SAMUEL JOHNSON TO MISS SUSANNA THRALE

London, 26 July, 1783

. . . Gluttony, is I think, less common among women than among men. Women commonly eat more sparingly, and are less curious in the choice of meat ; but if once you find a woman gluttonous, expect from her very little virtue. Her mind is enslaved to the lowest and grossest temptation.

A friend of mine, who courted a lady of whom he did not know much, was advised to see her eat, and if she was voluptuous at table, to forsake her. He married her however, and in a few weeks came to his adviser with this exclamation, ' It is the disturbance of my life to see this woman eat.' She was, as might be expected, selfish and brutal, and after some years of discord they parted, and I believe came together no more. . . .

' Let Us Join the Team '

MRS THRALE TO DR JOHNSON¹

9 August, 1775

You ask, dear Sir, if I keep your letters—to be sure I do ; for though I would not serve you as you said you would serve Lady — were

¹ Mrs Thrale's affection for Johnson is outspoken and vivacious, as is seen in this letter and the playful postscript. This tenderness is seen years later (28.4.1780), ' If I did not write regularly, you would half forget me, and that would be very wrong, for I *felt* my regard for you in my *face* last night when the criticisms were going on.'

you married to her—live a hundred miles off, and make her write once a week (was not it?) because her conversation and manners were coarse, but her letters elegant : yet I have always found the best supplement for talk was writing, and yours particularly so. My only reason to suppose that we should dislike looking over the correspondence twelve or twenty years hence, was because the sight of it would *not* revive the memory of cheerful times at all. God forbid that I should be less happy than now, when I am perpetually bringing or losing babies, both very dreadful operations to me, and which tear mind and body both in pieces very cruelly. Sophy is at this very instant beginning to droop, or I dream so ; and how is it likely one should ever have comfort in revising the annals of vexation?

You say, too, that I shall not grow wiser in twelve years, which is a bad account of futurity ; but if I grow happier I shall grow wiser, for being less chained down to surrounding circumstances, what power of thinking my mind naturally possesses will have fair play at least. The mother or mistress of a large family is in the case of a tethered nag, always treading and subsisting on the same spot ; she hears and repeats the same unregarded precepts ; frets over that which no fretting can diminish ; and hopes on, in very spite of experience, for what death does not ever suffer her to enjoy. . . .

So if ever I get quiet I shall get happy ; and if I get happy I shall have a chance to get wise. Why, wisdom itself stands still, says Mr. Johnson, and then how will you advance? It will be an advancement to me to trace that very argument, and examine whether it has advanced or no. Was not it your friend M—— who first said that next to winning at cards the greatest happiness was losing at cards? I should feel the second degree of delight in assuring myself that there was no wisdom to be obtained. Baker's *Reflections on Learning* was always a favourite book with me, and he says you have all been trotting in a circle these two or three thousand years—but let us join the team at least, and not stand gaping while others trot.

Frank Postscript

MRS THRALE TO DR JOHNSON

11 November, 1778

Mr. Scrase gives us fine fruit ; I wished you my pear yesterday ; but then what would *one pear* have done for you?

*A Biographer More Fluttered than his 'Princess'*¹

JAMES BOSWELL TO THE REVEREND WILLIAM TEMPLE

Edinburgh, 24 December, 1767

My dearest friend, In my last I told you that, after I had resolved to give up with the Princess for ever, I resolved first to see her, and that when I did see her, I was so lucky so to have a very agreeable interview, and was convinced by her that she was not to blame. This happened on a Thursday. That evening her cousin and most intimate friend, the Duchess of Gordon, came to town. Next day I was at the concert with them and afterwards supped at Lord Kames's. The Princess appeared distant and reserved : I could hardly believe that it was the same woman with whom I had been quite easy the day before. I was then uneasy. Next evening I was at the play with them. It was *Othello*. I sat close behind the Princess, and, at the most affecting scenes, I pressed my hand upon her waist. She was in tears, and rather leaned to me. The jealous Moor described my very soul. I often spoke to her of the torment she saw before her ; still I thought her distant, and still I felt uneasy. On Sunday the Duchess went away. I met the Princess at church. She was distant as before. I passed the evening at her aunt's, where I met a cousin of my Princess, a young lady of Glasgow, who had been with us at Adamtown. She told me she had something to communicate, and she then said my behaviour to the Princess was such that Mrs. B. and her daughter did not know how to behave to me. That it was not honourable to engage a young

¹ The fussiness of Boswell would be hard to believe without his own unconscious testimonies. He knows the thoughts of his Miss Blair no more than he knows ours. She married the Gilmour he names, and he and the other forlorn suitor (the planter Fullarton, whom he calls 'Nabob') took claret to themselves instead, as is seen in the next letter. His bosom friend Temple, a clergyman, received the strangest confessions and injunctions from him. When Temple was to spy out the land for him Boswell writes : 'Give Miss Blair my letter. Salute her and her mother ; ask to walk. See the place fully ; think what improvements should be made. Talk of my mare, the purse, the chocolate. Tell, you are my very old and intimate friend. Praise me for my good qualities—you know them ; but talk also how odd, how inconstant, how impetuous, how much accustomed to women of intrigue. Ask gravely, "Pray don't you imagine there is something of madness in that family?" . . . Study the mother. Remember well what passes. Stay tea . . . take notes ; perhaps you now fix me for life.'

lady's affections while I kept myself free ; in short, the good cousin persuaded me that the Princess had formed an attachment for me ; and she assured me the Nabob had been refused. On Monday forenoon I waited on Miss B.—I found her alone, and she did not seem distant. I told her that I was most sincerely in love with her, and that I only dreaded those faults which I had acknowledged to her. I asked her seriously if she now believed me in earnest. She said she did. I then asked her to be candid and fair as I had been with her, and to tell me if she had any particular liking for me. What think you, Temple, was her answer? No ; I really have no particular liking for you ; I like many people as well as you. (Temple, you must have it in the genuine dialogue.)

Boswell.—Do you indeed? Well, I cannot help it. I am obliged to you for telling me so in time. I am sorry for it.

Princess.—I like Jeany Maxwell (Duchess of Gordon) better than you.

B.—Very well. But do you like no man better than me?

P.—No.

B.—Is it possible that you may like me better than other men?

P.—I don't know what is possible.

(By this time I had risen and placed myself by her, and was in real agitation.)

B.—I'll tell you what, my dear Miss Blair, I love you so much that I am very unhappy : if you cannot love me, I must, if possible, endeavour to forget you. What would you have me do?

P.—I really don't know what you should do.

B.—It is certainly possible that you may love me, and if you shall ever do so, I shall be the happiest man in the world. Will you make a fair bargain with me? If you should happen to love me, will you own it?

P.—Yes.

B.—And if you should happen to love another, will you tell me immediately, and help me to make myself easy?

P.—Yes, I will.

B.—Well, you are very good (often squeezing and kissing her fine hand, while she looked at me with those beautiful black eyes).

P.—I may tell you, as a cousin, what I would not tell to another man.

B.—You may indeed. You are very fond of Auchinleck—that is one good circumstance.

P.—I confess I am. I wish I liked you as well as I do Auchinleck.

B.—I have told you how fond I am of you. But unless you like me

sincerely, I have too much spirit to ask you to live with me, as I know that you do not like me. If I could have you this moment for my wife, I would not.

P.—I should not like to put myself in your offer, though.

B.—Remember, you are both my cousin and my mistress, you must make me suffer as little as possible, as it may happen that I may engage your affections. I should think myself a most dishonourable man, if I were not now in earnest, and, remember, I depend upon your sincerity ; and, whatever happens, you and I shall never have another quarrel.

P.—Never.

B.—And I may come and see you as much as I please?

P.—Yes.

My worthy friend, what sort of scene was this? It was most curious. She said she would submit to her husband in most things. She said that to see one loving her would go far to make her love that person ; but she would not talk anyhow positively, for she never had felt the uneasy anxiety of love. We were an hour and a half together, and seemed pleased all the time. I think she behaved with spirit and propriety. I admire her more than ever. She intended to go to her aunt's, twelve miles from town, next day. Her jaunt was put off for some days. Yesterday I saw her again ; I was easy and cheerful, and just endeavoured to make myself agreeable.

This forenoon I was again with her. I told her how uneasy I was that she should be three weeks absent. She said I might amuse myself well enough : she seemed quite indifferent. I was growing angry again. But I recollected how she had candidly told me that she had no particular liking for me.

Temple, where am I now? What is the meaning of this? I drank tea with her this afternoon, and sat near four hours with her mother and her. Our conversation turned all on the manner in which two people might live. She has the justest ideas. She said she knew me now. She could laugh me out of my ill-humour. She could give Lord Auchinleck a lesson how to manage me. Temple, what does the girl mean? We talked a good deal of you : you are a prodigious favourite. Now, my worthy friend, assist me. You know my strange temper and impetuous disposition. Shall I boldly shake her off, as I fear I cannot be patient and moderate? Or, am I not bound in honour to suffer some time and watch her heart? How long must I suffer? How must I do? When she comes back, shall I affect any indifference, to try her? or shall I rather endeavour to inspire her with

my flame? Is it not below me to be made uneasy by her? Or, may I not be a philosopher, and without uneasiness take her, if she likes me, and if not, let her alone? During her absence I have time to get a return from you. It is certainly possible that all she has said may be literally true; but is not her indifference a real fault? Consult Mrs. Temple and advise me. . . .

Defeated Lover

JAMES BOSWELL TO THE REVEREND WILLIAM TEMPLE

Edinburgh, 8 February, 1768

My dear friend,

All is over between Miss Blair and me. I have delayed writing till I could give you some final account. About a fortnight after she went to the country, a report went that she was going to be married to Sir Alexander Gilmour, Member of Parliament for the county of Midlothian, a young man about thirty, who has £1,600 a year of estate, was formerly an officer in the Guards, and is now one of the clerks of the Board of Green Cloth, £1,000 a year—in short a noble match, though a man of expence and obliged to lead a London life. After the fair agreement between her and me, which I gave you fully in my last, I had a title to know the truth. I wrote to her seriously and told her that if she did not write me an answer I should believe the report to be true. After three days, I concluded from her silence that she was at last engaged. I endeavoured to laugh off my passion, and I got Sir Alexander Gilmour to frank a letter to her, which I wrote in a pleasant strain, and amused myself with the whim. Still, however, I was not absolutely certain, as her conduct has been so prudent all along. At last she comes to town, and who comes too but my old rival, the Nabob? I got acquainted with Mr. Fullarton, and he and I joked a good deal about our heiress. Last night he proposed that he and I should go together and pay her a visit for the first time after her return from the country. Accordingly we went and I give you my word, Temple, it was a curious scene. However, the Princess behaved exceedingly well, though with a reserve more than ordinary. When we left her, we both exclaimed, 'Upon my soul, a fine woman!' I began to like the Nabob much; so I said to him, 'I do believe, Mr. Fullarton, you and I are in same situation here. Is it possible to be upon honour, and generous in an affair of this kind?' We agreed it was.

Each then declared he was serious in his love for Miss B. and each protested he never before believed the other in earnest. We agreed to deal by one another in a fair and candid manner. I carried him to sup at a lady's, a cousin of mine, where we stayed till half an hour past eleven. We then went to a tavern and the good old claret was set before us. He told me that he had been most assiduous in attending Miss Blair ; but she never gave him the least encouragement and declared he was convinced she loved me as much as a woman could love a man. With equal honesty I told all that has past between her and me, and your observation on the *wary mother*. 'What,' said he, 'did Temple say so? If he had lived twenty years in the country with them, he could not have said a better thing.' I then told him Dempster's humorous saying that all Miss B's connections were in an absolute confederacy to lay hold of every man who has a £1,000 a year, and how I called their system a *Salmond Fishing*. 'You have hit it,' said he, 'we're all kept in play ; but I am positive you are the fish and Sir Alexander is only a mock salmon to force you to jump more expeditiously at the bait.' We sat till two this morning. We gave our words as men of honour that we would be honest to each other : so that neither should suffer needlessly and, to satisfy ourselves of our real situation, we gave our words that we should both ask her this morning, and I should go first. Could there be anything better than this? The Nabob talked to me with the warmth of the Indies, and professed the greatest pleasure on being acquainted with me.

Well, Temple, I went this morning and she made tea to me alone. I then asked her seriously if she was to be married to Sir Alexander. She said it was odd to believe every thing people said, and why did I put such question? &c. I said that she knew very well I was much in love with her, and that if I had any chance I would take a good deal of trouble to make myself agreeable to her. She said I need not take the trouble, and I must not be angry, for she thought it best to tell me honestly. 'What then,' said I, 'have I no chance?' 'No,' said she. I asked her to say so upon her word and upon honour. She fairly repeated the words. So I think, Temple, I had enough.

She would not tell me whether she was engaged to the knight. She said she would not satisfy an idle curiosity. But I own I had no doubt of it. What amazed me was that she and I were as easy and as good friends as ever. I told her I have great animal spirits and bear it wonderfully well. But this is really hard : I am thrown upon the wide world again. I don't know what will become of me.

Before dinner, the Nabob and I met, and he told me that he went and, in the most serious and submissive manner, begged to know if she was engaged. She would give him no satisfaction and treated him with a degree of coldness that overpowered him quite, poor man!

Such is the history of the lovers of this cruel Princess, who certainly is a lucky woman to have had a sovereign sway over so many admirers. I have endeavoured to make merry on my misfortune.

A Crambo Song on losing my Mistress

*Although I be an honest Laird,
In person rather strong and brawny,
For me the Heiress never car'd,
For she would have the Knight, Sir Sawney.*

*And when with ardent vows, I swore
Loud as Sir Jonathan Trelawney,
The Heiress shewed me to the door,
And said, she'd have the Knight, Sir Sawney.*

*She told me, with a scornful look,
I was ugly as a Tawney ;
For she a better fish could hook,
The rich and gallant Knight, Sir Sawney.*

N.B. I can find no more rhymes to Sawney.

Now that all is over, I see many faults in her, which I did not see before. Do you not think she has not feeling enough, nor that ingenuous spirit which your friend requires? The Nabob and many other people are still of opinion that she has not made sure of Sir Sawney, and that all this may be finesse. But I cannot suspect so young a creature of so much artifice and whatever may be in it, I am honourably off, and you may wonder at it, but I assure you I am very easy and cheerful. I am, however, resolved to look out for a good wife, either here or in England. I intend to be in London in March. My address will be at Mr. Dilly's, Bookseller. But I expect to hear from you before I set out, which will not be till the 14th of March. I rejoice to hear that Mrs. Temple is in a good way. My best wishes ever attend you and her.

I am your most affectionate friend,

JAMES BOSWELL

11 February. I have allowed my letter to lie by till this day. The heiress is a good Scots lass. But I must have an English woman. My mind is now twice as enlarged as it has been for some months. You cannot say how fine a woman I may marry, perhaps a Howard or some other of the noblest in the kingdom.

The Rigour of Art

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS TO MR BARRY

1769

Dear Sir,

I am very much obliged to you for your remembrance of me in your letter to Mr Burke, which, though I have read with great pleasure as a composition, I cannot help saying with some regret, to find that so great a portion of your attention has been engaged upon temporary matters, which might be so much more profitably employed upon what would stick by you through your whole life.

Whoever is resolved to excel in painting, or indeed in any other art, must bring all his mind to bear upon that one object, from the moment he rises till he goes to bed ; the effect of every object that meets the painter's eye may give him a lesson, provided his mind is calm, unembarrassed with other objects, and open to instruction. This general attention, with other studies connected with the art, which must employ the artist in his closet, will be found sufficient to fill up life, if it was much longer than it is. Were I in your place, I would consider myself as playing a great game, and never suffer the little malice and envy of my rivals to draw off my attention from the main object : which if you pursue with a steady eye, it will not be in the power of all the Cicerones in the world to hurt you. Whilst they are endeavouring to prevent the gentlemen from employing the young artists, instead of injuring them, they are, in my opinion doing them the greatest service.

Whilst I was at Rome I was very little employed by them, and that I always considered as so much time lost. Copying those ornamental pictures, which the travelling gentlemen always bring home with them as furniture for their houses, is far from being the most profitable manner of a student spending his time.

Whoever has great views I would recommend to him, whilst at Rome, rather to live on bread and water, than lose those advantages which he can never hope to enjoy a second time, and which he will find only in the Vatican ; where, I will engage, no cavalier sends his

students to copy for him. I do not mean this as any reproach to the gentlemen ; the works in that place, though they are the proper study of an artist, make but an awkward figure painted in oil, and reduced to the size of easel pictures. The *Capella Sistina* is the production of the greatest genius that was ever employed in the arts ; it is worth considering by what principles that stupendous greatness of style is produced ; and endeavouring to produce something of your own on those principles, will be a more advantageous method of study, than copying the *St Cecilia* in the Borghese, or the *Herodius* of Guido, which may be copied to eternity, without contributing one jot towards making a man a more able painter.

Assessment of a Suitor

LAURENCE STERNE TO A FRIEND

Coxwold, 23 May, 1765

At this moment I am sitting in my summer-house with my head and heart full, not of my Uncle Toby's amours with the Widow Wadman,¹ but my Sermons—and your letter has drawn me out of a pensive mood—the spirit of it pleaseth me, in this solitude, what can I tell or write to you but about myself? I am glad that you are in love, 'twill cure you at least of the spleen, which has a bad effect both on man and woman—I myself must ever have some Dulcinea in my head, it harmonizes the soul—and in those cases I first endeavour to make the lady believe so, rather I begin first to make myself believe that I am in love,—but carry on my affairs quite in the French way, sentimentally—*l'amour*, (say they) *n'est rien sans sentiment*. Now notwithstanding they make such a pother about the word, they have no precise idea annexed to it—And so much for the same subject called love. I must tell you how I have just treated a French gentleman of fortune in France, who took a liking to my daughter. Without any ceremony (having got my direction from my wife's banker) he wrote me word that he was in love with my daughter, and desired to know what fortune I would give her at present, and how much at my death—by the bye, I think there was very little sentiment on his side. My answer was, 'Sir, I shall give her ten thousand pounds on the day

¹ The opening reference is to Sterne's own *Tristram Shandy*, where Uncle Toby withstands the arch ways of the widow next door.

of marriage—my calculation is as follows—she is not eighteen, you are sixty-two—there goes five thousand pounds—then sir, you at least think her not ugly—she has many accomplishments, speaks Italian, French, plays upon the guitar, and as I fear you play no instrument whatever, I think you will be happy to take her at my terms, for here finishes the account of the ten thousand pounds.’ I do not suppose but he will take this as I mean, that is, a flat refusal.

‘ *A Tribe of Dames* ’—*Early and Noble Militants*

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU¹ TO THE COUNTESS OF
POMFRET

March, 1738

. . . Here is no news to be sent you from this place, which has been for this fortnight and still continues overwhelmed with politics, and which are of so mysterious a nature, one ought to have some of the gifts of Lilly or Partridge² to be able to write about them ; and I leave all those dissertations to those distinguished mortals who are endowed with the talent of divination ; though I am at present the only one or my sex who seems to be of that opinion, the ladies having shown their zeal and appetite for knowledge in a most glorious manner. At the last warm debate in the House of Lords, it was unanimously resolved there should be no crowd of unnecessary auditors ; consequently the fair sex were excluded, and the gallery destined to the sole use of the House of Commons. Notwithstanding which determination, a tribe of dames resolved to show on this occasion that neither men nor laws could resist them. These heroines were Lady Huntingdon, the Duchess of Queensberry, the Duchess of Ancaster, Lady Westmoreland, Lady Cobham, Lady Charlotte Edwin, Lady Archibald Hamilton and her daughter, Mrs. Scott, and Mrs. Pendarvis, and Lady Frances Saunderson. I am thus particular in their names, since I look upon them to be the boldest assertors, and most resigned sufferers for liberty, I ever read of. They presented themselves at the door at nine o’clock in the

¹ The selection from Lady Mary’s letters is made to show the sharpness of her style and the shrewdness of her wit : how much those qualities outweigh any ‘ substantive ’ interest in letter-writing can be seen by comparing the same writer’s celebrated letters about Turkish life, written when her husband was ambassador in Constantinople.

² Astrologers—the former a royalist and more serious than Partridge, a cobbler parodied in Swift’s *Bickerstaff* papers.

morning, where Sir William Saunderson respectfully informed them that the Chancellor had made an order against their admittance. The Duchess of Queensberry, as head of the squadron, pished at the ill-breeding of a mere lawyer, and desired him to let them upstairs privately. After some modest refusals, he swore by G—— he would not let them in. Her grace, with a noble warmth, answered, by G—— they would come in in spite of the Chancellor and the whole House. This being reported, the Peers resolved to starve them out ; an order was made that the doors should not be opened till they had raised their siege. These Amazons now showed themselves qualified for the duty even of foot soldiers ; they stood there till five in the afternoon, without either sustenance or evacuation, every now and then playing volleys of thumps, kicks, and raps against the door, with so much violence that the speakers in the House were scarce heard. When the Lords were not to be conquered by this, the two duchesses (very well apprised of the use of stratagems in war) commanded a dead silence of half an hour ; and the Chancellor, who thought this a certain proof of their absence (the Commons also being very impatient to enter), gave order for the opening of the door, upon which they all rushed in, pushed aside their competitors, and placed themselves in the front rows of the gallery. They stayed there till after eleven, when the House rose ; and during the debate gave applause, and showed marks of dislike, not only by smiles and winks (which have always been allowed in these cases), but by noisy laughs and apparent contempts ; which is supposed the true reason why poor Lord Hervey spoke miserably. I beg your pardon, dear madam, for this long relation ; but 'tis impossible to be short on so copious a subject ; and you must own this action very well worthy of record, and I think not to be paralleled in history, ancient or modern. I look so little in my own eyes (who was at that time ingloriously sitting over a tea-table), I hardly dare subscribe myself even,

Yours,

No Obligation

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU TO THE COUNTESS OF BUTE

Louvere, 1 November, 1749

Dear Child,

I received yours of August 25, and my Lord Bute's obliging notice of your safe delivery at the same time. I wish you joy of your young

son, and of every thing else. You do not mention your father, by which I suppose he is not returned to England, and am in pain for his health, having heard but once from him since he left it, and know not whether he has received my letters. I dare say you need not be in any doubt of his good opinion of you ; for my part, I am so far persuaded of the goodness of your heart, I have often had a mind to write you a consolatory epistle on my own death, which I believe will be some affliction, though my life is wholly useless to you. That part of it which we passed together you have reason to remember with gratitude, though I think you misplace it ; you are no more obliged to me for bringing you into the world, than I am to you for coming into it, and I never made use of that commonplace (and like most commonplace, false) argument, as exacting any return of affection. There was a mutual necessity on us both to part at that time, and no obligation on either side. In the case of your infancy, there was so great a mixture of instinct, I can scarce even put that in the number of the proofs I have given you of my love ; but I confess I think it a great one, if you compare my after conduct towards you with that of other mothers, who generally look on their children as devoted to their pleasures, and bound by duty to have no sentiments but what they please to give them ; playthings at first, and afterwards the objects on which they may exercise their spleen, tyranny, or ill humour. I have always thought of you in a different manner. Your happiness was my first wish, and the pursuit of all my actions, divested of all self-interest. So far I think you ought, and believe you do, remember me as your real friend. Absence and distance have not the power to lessen any part of my tenderness for you, which extends to all yours, and I am ever your most affectionate mother.

In Italy—Once

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU TO THE COUNTESS OF BUTE

(i)

Louvere, 2 May, 1753

... I believe I wrote you word I intended to go to the opera at Brescia ; but the weather being cold, and the roads bad, prevented my journey ; and the people of this village (which is the largest I know : the curate tells me he has two thousand communicants) presented me

a petition for leave to erect a theatre in my saloon. This house has stood empty many years before I took it, and they were accustomed to turn the stables into a playhouse every carnival : it is now occupied by my horses, and they had no other place proper for a stage. I easily complied with their request, and was surprised at the beauty of their scenes, which, though painted by a country painter, are better coloured, and the perspective better managed, than in any of the second-rate theatres in London. I liked it so well, it is not yet pulled down. The performance was yet more surprising, the actors being all peasants ; but the Italians have so natural a genius for comedy, they acted as well as if they had been brought up to nothing else, particularly the *Arlequino*, who far surpassed any of our English, though only the tailor of the village, and I am assured never saw a play in any other place. It is a pity they have not better poets, the pieces being not at all superior to our drolls. The music, habits, and illumination were at the expense of the parish, and the whole entertainment, which lasted the three last days of the carnival, cost me only a barrel of wine, which I gave the actors, and is not so dear as small beer in London. At present, as the old song says,

*All my whole care
Is my farming affair,
To make my corn grow, and my apple-trees bear.*

My improvements give me great pleasure, and so much profit, that if I could live a hundred years longer, I should certainly provide for all my grandchildren : but, alas! as the Italians say, *son sonato ventiquattro ora* : and it is not long I must expect to write myself your most affectionate mother.

(ii)

Louvere 10, July, 1753

... This spot of ground is so beautiful, I am afraid you will scarce credit the description, which, however, I can assure you, shall be very literal, without any embellishment from imagination. It is on a bank, forming a kind of peninsula, raised from the river Oglio fifty feet, to which you may descend by easy stairs cut in the turf, and either take the air on the river, which is as large as the Thames at Richmond, or by walking in an avenue two hundred yards on the side of it, you find a

wood of a hundred acres, which was all ready cut into walks and ridings when I took it. I have only added fifteen bowers in different views, with seats of turf. They were easily made, here being a large quantity of underwood, and a great number of wild vines, which twist to the top of the highest trees, and from which they make a very good sort of wine they call *brusco*. I am now writing to you in one of these arbours, which is so thickly shaded, the sun is not troublesome, even at noon. Another is on the side of the river, where I have made a camp kitchen, that I may take the fish, dress, and eat it immediately and at the same time see the barks, which ascend or descend every day to or from Mantua, Guastalla, or Pont de Vie, all considerable towns. This little wood is carpeted, in their succeeding seasons, with violets and strawberries, inhabited by a nation of nightingales, and filled with game of all kinds. . . .

I believe my description gives you but an imperfect idea of my garden. Perhaps I shall succeed better in describing my manner of life, which is as regular as that of any monastery. I generally rise at six, and as soon as I have breakfasted, put myself at the head of my needle women and work with them till nine. I then inspect my dairy, and take a turn among my poultry, which is a very large inquiry. I have, at present, two hundred chickens, besides turkeys, geese, ducks, and peacocks. All things have hitherto prospered under my care: my bees and silkworms are doubled, and I am told that, without accidents, my capital will be so in two years' time. At eleven o'clock I retire to my books: I dare not indulge myself in that pleasure above an hour. At twelve I constantly dine, and sleep after dinner till about three. I then send for some of my old priests, and either play at piquet or whist,¹ till 'tis cool enough to go out. One evening I walk in my

¹ The reference to cards reminds one of an unfavourable glimpse of this famous lady in Horace Walpole's letter to West (from Florence, 2.10.1740) where he calls her 'Moll Worthless', and laughs at her age, her oglings and cosmetics, and adds: 'She played at pharaoh two or three times at princess Craon's, where she cheats horse and foot.' Walpole is never kind about hers. To Conway, 25.9.40, he describes her 'old mazarine blue wrapper, that gape open and discovers a canvas petticoat', with other details less flattering still. Twenty years later (2.2.1762) not long before her death, he is writing: 'Lady Mary Wortley is arrived; I have seen her; I think her avarice, her dirt, and her vivacity are all increased.' Thus is the other great letter-writer of the century reflected in the letters of the one; but we can end, as current idiom would say, with accent on vivacity, by which they both still live for us. Lady Mary, with all her eccentricities, lived up to a lively passage in an early letter

wood, where I often sup, take the air on horseback the next, and go on the water the third. The fishery of this part of the river belongs to me ; and my fisherman's little boat (to which I have a green lustrous awning) serves me for a barge. He and his son are my rowers without any expense, he being very well paid by the profit of the fish, which I give him on condition of having every day one dish for my table. Here is plenty of every sort of fresh-water fish (excepting salmon) ; but we have a large trout so like it, that I, who have almost forgot the taste, do not distinguish it.

We are both placed properly in regard to our different times of life : you amidst the fair, the gallant, and the gay ; I in a retreat, where I enjoy every amusement that solitude can afford. I confess I sometimes wish for a little conversation ; but I reflect that the commerce of the world gives more uneasiness than pleasure, and quiet is all the hope that can reasonably be indulged at my age. My letter is of an unconscionable length ; I should ask your pardon for it, but I had a mind to give you an idea of my mode of passing my time,—take it as an instance of the affection of, dear child,

Your most affectionate mother.

In Self-defence

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU TO THE COUNTESS OF BUTE

Louvre, 30 September, 1757

My dear Child,

Lord Bute has been so obliging as to let me know your safe delivery, and the birth of another daughter : may she be as meritorious in your eyes as you are in mine ! I can wish nothing better to you both, though I have some reproaches to make you.

Daughter ! daughter ! don't call names : you are always abusing my pleasures, which is what no mortal will bear. Trash, lumber, sad stuff, are the titles you give to my favourite amusement. If I called a white staff a stick of wood, a gold key gilded brass, and the ensigns of illustrious orders coloured strings, this may be philosophically true, but would be very ill received. We have all our playthings ; happy

to her husband, of 9.12.1712, ' 'Tis a maxim with me to be young as long as one can : there is nothing that can pay one for the invaluable ignorance which is the companion of youth ; those sanguine groundless hopes, and that lively vanity, which make all the happiness of life.'

are they that can be contented with those they can obtain ; those hours are spent in the wisest manner, that can easiest shade the ills of life, and are least productive of ill consequences. I think my time better employed in reading the adventures of imaginary people, than the Duchess of Marlborough's, who passed the latter years of her life in paddling with her will, and contriving schemes of plaguing some, and extracting praise from others, to no purpose ; eternally disappointed and eternally fretting. The active scenes are over at my age. I indulge, with all the art I can, my taste for reading. If I would confine it to valuable books, they are almost as rare as valuable men. I must be content with what I can find. As I approach a second childhood, I endeavour to enter into the pleasures of it. Your youngest son is, perhaps, at this very moment riding on a poker with great delight, not at all regretting that it is not a gold one, and much less wishing it an Arabian horse, which he would not know how to manage. I am reading an idle tale, not expecting wit or truth in it, and am very glad it is not metaphysics to puzzle my judgment, or history to mislead my opinion : he fortifies his health by exercise ; I calm my cares by oblivion. The methods may appear low to busy people ; but, if he improves his strength, and I forget my infirmities, we both attain very desirable ends.

‘ *Purring About You* ’

KITTY CLIVE¹ TO DAVID GARRICK

(1774?)

I *schreamed* at your parish business. I think I see you in your churchwardenship quarrelling for not making those brown loaves big enough ;

¹ Kitty Clive's nickname with Garrick was ‘ the Pivy ’. She had vivacious genius, and Johnson's tribute to her is as penetrative upon the function of art as it is appreciative of her acting. ‘ She was a better romp than any I ever saw in nature.’ She was an honest woman and a zealous but touchy actress, and Garrick sometimes needed all his firm tact to cope with her candour ; but the Pivy was true-hearted, and she had the rare insight of genius into Garrick's power : watching him from the wings she once said, with tears in her eyes : ‘ Damn him, I believe he could act a gridiron.’ Horace Walpole gave her a house next his at Strawberry Hill, and their friendship was constant and full of entertainment. She was prepared, writes he to Montagu, ‘ to play at quadrille with you from dinner till supper, and to sing old Purcell to you from

but for God's sake never think of being a justice of the peace, for the people will quarrel on purpose to be brought before you to hear you talk, so that you may have as much business upon the lawn, as you had upon the boards. If I should live to be thaw'd, I will come to town on purpose to kiss you.

I am in a great fuss. Pray what is the meaning of a quarter of a hundred Miss Moors coming purring about you with their poems, and plays, and romances. . . . Mrs Garrick has been so good to say she would spare me a little corner of your heart, and I can tell the Miss Moors they shall not have one morsel of it. *What* do they pretend to take it by *force of lines* : if that's the case I shall write such verses as shall make them stare again, and send them to Bristol with a flea in their ear! Here have I two letters, one and not one line, nay, you write to the Poulterer's woman rather than the Pivy, and order her to bring me the note : and the poor creature is so proud of a letter from you, that it has quite turned her head, and instead of picking her Poultry she is dancing about her shop, with a wisp of straw in her hand, like the poor Ophelia, singing :

How should I your true love know.

And I must tell you, if you don't write to me directly and tell me a great deal of news, I believe I shall sing the next of the mad songs myself.

Her Perception of Genius—and a Kindness Added

KITTY CLIVE TO DAVID GARRICK, ON HIS RETIREMENT

Twickenham, 23 June, 1776

Dear Sir,—Is it really true that you have put an end to the glory of Drury Lane Theatre? *If it is so*, let me congratulate my dear Mr. and Mrs. Garrick on their approaching happiness : *I know* what it will be ; you cannot yet have an idea of it ; *but* if you should still be so wicked not to be satisfied with that *unbounded*, uncommon degree of fame you have received as an actor, and which no other actor ever did receive—

supper to breakfast next morning.' And in another letter he calls her half his soul, *dimidium animae meae*. This is small wonder, considering a tribute from Johnson that the greatest wit might envy : ' Clive is a grand thing to sit by, she always understands what you say.'

nor no other actor ever *can* receive ;—I say, if you should still long to be dipping your fingers in their theatrical pudding (now without plums), you will be no Garrick for the Pivy. In the height of the public admiration for you, when you were never mentioned with any other appellation but the Garrick, the charming man, the fine fellow, the delightful creature, both by men and ladies ; when they were admiring everything you did and everything you scribbled, at this very time The Pivy was a living witness that they did not know, nor could they be sensible of half your perfections. I have seen you with your magical hammer in your hand, endeavouring to beat your ideas into the heads of creatures who had none of their own. I have seen you, with lamb-like patience, endeavouring to make them comprehend you ; and I have seen you when that could not be done. I have seen your lamb turned into a lion : by this your great labour and pains the public was entertained ; they thought they all acted very fine—they did not see you pull the wires.

There are people now on the stage to whom you gave their consequence ; they think themselves very great ; now let them go on in their new parts without your leading-strings, and they will soon convince the world what their genius is. I have always said this to everybody, even when your horses and mine were in their highest prancing. While I was under your control I did not say half the fine things I thought of you, because it looked like flattery, and you know your Pivy was always proud ; besides, I thought you did not like me then, but now I am sure you do, which makes me send you this letter. . .

Now let me say one word about my poor unfortunate friend, Miss Pope :¹ I know how much she disoblged you ; and if I had been in your place, I believe I should have acted just as you did. But by this time I hope you have forgot your resentment, and will look upon her late behaviour as having been taken with a dreadful fit of vanity, which

¹ This paragraph is the main link in a pretty story. Garrick had declined Miss Pope's application for a higher salary, and she had left him with much rudeness, including a scorn of his 'paragraphs', or, as we should say, 'publicity.' Kitty had at once interceded, though a less generous woman might have been jealously disapproving of her successor. Garrick was obdurate. Kitty then sent her brother, Jemmy Raftor, to plead. Garrick said he had waited two months and Miss Pope's place was filled. Then Kitty tenaciously sent this 'one word', and it is pleasant to note that Garrick nearly turned Miss Pope's head with happiness by calling her back on her own terms ; and he wrote on our letter 'my Pivy excellent!'

for that time took her senses from her, and having been tutored by an affected beast, who helped her to turn her head ; but pray recollect her in the other light, a faithful creature to you, on whom you could always depend, certainly a good actress, amiable in her character, both in her being a very modest woman, and very good to her family ; and, to my certain knowledge, has the greatest regard for you. Now, my dear Mr. Garrick, I hope it is not yet too late to reinstate her before you quit your affairs there ; I beg it, I entreat it ; I shall look upon it as the greatest favour you can confer on your

Ever obliged friend,

C. CLIVE

Smell of Dogs ; and Poet's Dreams

THOMAS GRAY TO HORACE WALPOLE

Burnham, September, 1737

I was hindered in my last, and so could not give you all the trouble I would have done. The description of a road, which your coach wheels have so often honoured, it would be needless to give you : suffice it that I arrived safe at my uncle's, who is a great hunter in imagination ; his dogs take up every chair in the house, so I am forced to stand at this present writing ; and though the gout forbids him galloping after them in the field, yet he continues still to regale his ears and nose with their comfortable noise and stink. He holds me mighty cheap, I perceive, for walking when I should ride, and reading when I should hunt. My comfort amidst all this is, that I have at a distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common) all my own, at least as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices ; mountains, it is true that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover Cliff ; but just such hills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous. Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds.

*And as they bow their hoary tops relate,
In murmur'ing sounds, the dark decrees of fate ;*

*While visions, as poetic eyes avow,
Cling to each leaf, and swarm on every bough.*

At the foot of one of these squats ME, I (*il penseroso*), and there grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol round me like Adam in Paradise, before he had an Eve ; but I think he did not use to read Virgil, as I commonly do there. In this situation I often converse with my Horace, aloud too, that is talk to you, but I do not remember that I ever heard you answer me. I beg pardon for taking all the conversation to myself, but it is entirely your own fault. . . .

The End of a Fellow of Pembroke

THOMAS GRAY TO DR CLARKE

Pembroke Hall, 12 August, 1760

Not knowing whether you are yet returned from your sea-water, I write at random to you. For me, I am come to my resting-place, and find it very necessary, after living for a month in a house with three women that laughed from morning to night, and would allow nothing to the sulkiness of my disposition. Company and cards at home, parties by land and water abroad, and (what they call) *doing something*, that is, racketting about from morning to night, are occupations, I find, that wear out my spirits, especially in a situation where one might sit still and be alone with pleasure ; for the place was a hill like Clifden, opening to a very extensive and diversified landscape, with the Thames, which is navigable, running at its foot.

I would wish to continue here (in a very different scene, it must be confessed) till Michaelmas ; but I fear I must come to town much sooner. Cambridge is a delight of a place, now there is nobody in it. I do believe you would like it, if you knew what it was without inhabitants. It is they, I assure you that get it an ill name and spoil all. Our friend Dr. Chapman (one of its nuisances) is not expected here again in a hurry. He is gone to his grave with five fine mackerel (large and full of roe) in his belly. He eat them all at one dinner ; but his fate was a turbot on Trinity Sunday, of which he left little for the company besides bones. He had not been hearty all the week ; but after this sixth fish he never held up his head more, and a violent looseness carried him off.—They say he made a very good end.

Amiable Passage with a Duke

THOMAS GRAY TO DR WHARTON

London, 31 January, 1761

... One hears nothing of the king¹ but what gives one the best opinion of him imaginable. I hope it may hold. The royal family run loose about the world, and people do not know how to treat them, nor they how to be treated. They visit and are visited. Some come to the street-door to receive them, and that they say is too much ; others to the head of the stairs and that they think is too little. Nobody sits down with them, not even in their own houses, unless at a card table, so the world are likely to grow very weary of the honour. None but the Duke of York enjoy themselves (you know he always did), but the world seems weary of this honour too, for a different reason. I have just heard no bad story of him. When he was at Southampton in the summer, there was a clergyman in the neighbourhood with two very handsome daughters. He had soon wind of them, and dropped in for some reason or other, came again and again, and grew familiar enough to eat a bone of their mutton. At last he said to the father, 'Miss —— leads a mighty confined life here, always at home ; why can't you let one of them go and take an airing now and then with me in my chaise?' 'Ah! sir,' (says the parson), 'do but look at them, a couple of hale fresh-coloured hearty wenches! They need no airing, they are well enough ; but there is their mother, poor woman, has been in a declining way many years. If your royal highness would give her an airing now and then, it would be doing us a great kindness indeed!'

A Hostess Upset, a Guest Very Cool, and a Maid Optimistic

HORACE WALPOLE² TO GEORGE MONTAGU

Arlington-street, 16 August, 1746

It will be difficult to make you believe to what heights of affectation or extravagance my Lady Townshend carries her passion for my Lord

¹ George III had just succeeded his grandfather.

² Horace Walpole, most voluminous of letter-writers, is much liked or much detested. Herbert Paul's *Men and Letters* condemns 'the pompous triviality which he mistook for worldly wisdom'; and Saintsbury quotes the sharp

Kilmarnock,¹ whom she never saw but at the bar of his trial, and was smitten with his falling shoulders. She has been under his windows ; sends messages to him ; has got his dog and his snuff-box ; has taken lodgings out of town for tomorrow and Monday night, and then goes to Greenwich ; forswears conversing with the bloody English, and has taken a French master. She insisted on Lord Hervey's promising her he would not sleep a whole night for my Lord Kilmarnock, 'and in return,' says she, 'never trust me more if I am not as yellow as a jonquil for him.' She said gravely t'other day. 'Since I saw my Lord Kilmarnock, I really think no more of Sir Harry Nisbet, than if there was no such man in the world.' But of all her flights, yesterday was the strongest. George Selwyn dined with her, and not thinking her affliction so entirely serious as she pretends, talked rather jokingly of the execution. She burst into a flood of tears and rage ; told him she now believed all his father and mother had said of him ; and with a thousand other reproaches flung upstairs. George coolly took Mrs. Dorcas, her woman, and made her sit down to finish the bottle : 'And pray, Sir,' said Dorcas, 'do you think my lady will be prevailed upon to let me go see this execution? I have a friend that has promised to take care of me, and I can lie in the Tower the night before.' . . .

verdict of d'Aurévilly '*un fruit brillant, amer, glacé*'. Macaulay is hard on him, comparing his work to *pâté-de-foie-gras*, a luxury owed to disorders of the goose's liver—a judgment hardly compatible with the praise that follows. 'No man who has written so much is so seldom tiresome.' Political prejudice easily makes a fool of itself. Walpole was born rich, and he was idle in so far as his tastes and energies ranged wide but not deep. His delight in acquaintance is often mischievous in the manner of gossips who love effect (see Note referring to p. 59). 'Never,' says Thackeray, 'was such a brilliant, jiggling, smirking Vanity Fair as that through which he leads us' ; while Austin Dobson claims that 'for playfulness, pungency, irony, persiflage, there is nothing in English like his correspondence.' Moreover, he could be true and generous to his friends, and they included many people of heart and wit, such as Gray and Kitty Clive. He offered (20.7.1744) to share his fortune with his friend Harry Conway, and his letter to Lady Hervey (p. 70) shows an affectionate dignity. Lytton Strachey has shown that, in spite of pride and over-sensitiveness, 'Walpole's nature was in reality peculiarly affectionate' ; and Fitzgerald saw this before him, for in a letter to Miss Biddell (Nov., 1876) he says : ' . . . You would not like the man, so satirical, selfish, and frivolous, you would think. But I think I could show you that he had a very loving heart for a few, and a very firm, just understanding under all his Wit and Fun.'

¹ *Kilmarnock* : Wm. Boyd, fourth Earl, was captured at Culloden and executed on Tower Hill for his support of the Young Pretender.

'He Has Got a Housebreaker for You'

HORACE WALPOLE TO GEORGE MONTAGU

Strawberry-Hill, 6 June, 1752

I have just been in London for two or three days, to fetch an adventure, and am returned to my hill and my castle. I can't say I lost my labour, as you shall hear. Last Sunday night, being as wet a night as you shall see in a summer's day, about half an hour after twelve, I was just come home from White's, and undressing to step into bed, I heard Harry, who you know lies forwards, roar out, 'Stop thief!' and run down stairs. I ran after him—don't be frightened; I have not lost one enamel, nor bronze, nor have not been shot through the head again. A gentlewoman, who lives at governor Pitt's, next door but one to me, and where Mr. Bentley used to live, was going to bed too, and heard people breaking into Mr. Freeman's house, who, like some acquaintance of mine in Albemarle-street, goes out of town, locks up his doors, and leaves the community to watch his furniture. N.B. It was broken open but two years ago, and I and all the chairmen vow they shall steal his house away another time, before we will trouble our heads about it. Well, madam called out 'Watch'; two men, who were sentinels, ran away, and Harry's voice after them. Down came I, and with a posse of chairmen and watchmen found the third fellow in the area of Mr. Freeman's house. Mayhap you have seen all this in the papers, little thinking who commanded the detachment. Harry fetched a blunderbuss to invite the thief up. One of the chairmen who was drunk, cried, 'Give me the blunderbuss, I'll shoot him!' But as the general's head was a little cooler, he prevented military execution, and took the prisoner without bloodshed, intending to make his triumphal entry into the metropolis of Twickenham with his captive tied to the wheels of his post-chaise.—I find my style rises so much with the recollection of my victory, that I don't know how to descend to tell you that the enemy was a carpenter, and had a leather apron on. The next step was to share my glory with my friends. I dispatched a courier to White's for George Selwyn, who, you know, loves nothing upon earth so well as a criminal, except the execution of him. It happened very luckily that the drawer, who received my message, has very lately been robbed himself, and had the wound fresh in his memory. He stalked up into the club room, stopped short, and with a hollow trembling voice said, 'Mr. Selwyn! Mr. Walpole's

compliments to you, and he has got a house-breaker for you!’ A squadron immediately came to reinforce me, and, having summoned Moreland with the keys of the fortress, we marched into the house to search for more of the gang. Col. Seabright with his sword drawn went first, and then I, exactly the figure of Robinson Crusoe, with a candle and lanthorn in my hand, a carabine upon my shoulder, my hair wet and about my ears, and in a linen night-gown and slippers. We found the kitchen shutters forced, but not finished ; and in the area a tremendous bag of tools, a hammer large enough for the hand of a Jael, and six chisels! All which *opima spolia*,¹ as there was no temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in the neighbourhood, I was reduced to offer on the altar of Sir Thomas Clarges.

I am now, as I told you, returned to my plough with as much humility and pride as any of my great predecessors. We lead quite a rural life, have had a sheep-shearing, a haymaking, a syllabub² under the cow, and a fishing—of three gold fish out of Poyang, for a present to madam Clive. They breed with me excessively, and are grown to the size of small perch.

The Fire

HORACE WALPOLE TO RICHARD BENTLEY

Arlington-street, 23 February, 1755

‘ . . . I am at present confined with a cold, which I caught by going to a fire in the middle of the night, and in the middle of the snow, two days ago. About five in the morning Harry waked me with a candle in his hand, and cried, ‘ Pray, your honour, don’t be frightened! ’—‘ No, Harry, I am not ; but what is it that I am not to be frightened at? ’—‘ There is a great fire here in St. James’s-street.’—I rose, and indeed thought all St. James’s-street was on fire, but it proved in Bury-street. However, you know I can’t resist going to a fire ; for it is certainly the only horrid sight that is fine. I slipped on my slippers, and an embroidered suit that hung on the chair, and ran to Bury-street, and stepped into a pipe that was broken up for water. It would have made

¹ *Opima Spolia*, rich booty. The phrase is very apt self-irony here, as it signifies, in Livy, the spoils taken from the enemy’s general when slain by the victorious commander himself.

² A mixture of wine with cream or milk.

a picture—the horror of the flames, the snow, the day breaking with difficulty through so foul a night, and my figure, partly per *pale*¹ mud and gold. It put me in mind of Lady Margaret Herbert's providence, who asked somebody for a *pretty* pattern for a night-cap. 'Lord!' said they, 'what signifies the pattern of a night-cap?'—'Oh, child,' said she, 'but you know, in case of fire.' There were two houses burnt, and a poor maid; an officer jumped out of window, and is much hurt, and two young beauties were conveyed out the same way in their shifts. There have been two more great fires. Alderman Belchier's house at Epsom, that belonged to the Prince, is burnt, and Beckford's² fine house in the country, with pictures and furniture to a great value. He says, 'Oh! I have an odd fifty thousand pounds in a drawer: I will build it up again: it won't be above a thousand pounds a-piece difference to my thirty children.' Adieu!

Showing a Cynic Has a Heart

HORACE WALPOLE TO THE RIGHT HON LADY HERVEY

12 January, 1760

I am very sorry your ladyship could doubt a moment on the cause of my concern yesterday. I saw you much displeased at what I had said; and I felt so innocent of the least intention of offending you that I could not help being struck at my own ill-fortune, and with the sensation raised by finding you mix great goodness with great severity.

I am naturally very impatient under praise; I have reflected enough on myself to know I don't deserve it; and with this consciousness you ought to forgive me, Madam, if I dreaded that the person whose esteem I valued the most in the world, should think that I was fond of what I know is not my due. I meant to express this apprehension as respectfully as I could, but my words failed me—a misfortune not too common to me, who am apt to say too much, not too little! Perhaps it is that very quality which your ladyship calls wit, and I call tinsel, for which I dread being praised. I wish to recommend myself to you

¹ A term in heraldry, meaning (a ground) 'divided by a pale' or 'ordinary', such as a vertical bar.

² The 'fine house' refers to Fonthill, Wilts., home of the rich Londoner, Wm B. (father of the author of *Vathek*).

by more essential merits—and if I can only make you laugh, it will be very apt to make me as much concerned as I was yesterday. For people to whose approbation I am indifferent, I don't care whether they commend or condemn me for my wit ; in the former case they will not make me admire myself for it ; in the latter, they can't make me think but what I have thought already. But for the few whose friendship I wish, I would fain have them see, that under all the idleness of my spirits there are some very serious qualities, such as warmth, gratitude, and sincerity, which ill returns may render useless or may make me lock up in my breast, but which will remain there while I have a being.

Having drawn you this picture of myself, Madam, a subject I have to say so much upon, will not your good-nature apply it as it deserves, to what passed yesterday? Won't you believe that my concern flowed from being disappointed at having offended one whom I ought by so many ties to try to please, and whom, if I ever meant anything, I had meant to please? I intended you should see how much I despise wit, if I have any, and that you should know my heart was void of vanity and full of gratitude. They are very few I desire should know so much ; but my passions act too promptly and too naturally, as you saw, when I am with those I really love, to be capable of any disguise. Forgive me, Madam, this tedious detail ; but of all people living I cannot bear that you should have a doubt about me.

Strange Wayside Scene Before a Great Actress

HORACE WALPOLE TO THE EARL OF STRAFFORD

Strawberry-hill, 4 September, 1760

... I cannot help telling your lordship how I was diverted the night I returned hither. I was sitting with Mrs. Clive, her sister and brother, on the bench near the road at the end of her long walk. We heard a violent scolding ; and looking out, saw a pretty woman standing by a high chaise, in which was a young fellow, and a coachman riding by. The damsel had lost her hat, her cap, her cloak, her temper and her senses ; and was more drunk and more angry than you can conceive. Whatever the young man had done or had not done to her, she would not ride in the chaise with him, but stood cursing and swearing in the most outrageous style : and when she had vented all the oaths she could think of, she at last wished *perfidion* might seize him. You may

imagine how we laughed.—The fair intoxicate turned round, and cried, 'I am laughed at?—Who is it?—What, Mrs. Clive? Kitty Clive?—No: Kitty Clive would never behave so!'—I wish you could have seen my neighbour's confusion. She certainly did not grow paler than ordinary.¹ I laugh now while I repeat it to you. . . .

Highwayman—and a Little Forethought

HORACE WALPOLE TO THE COUNTESS OF UPPER OSSORY

7 October, 1781

. . . Lady Browne and I were, as usual, going to the Duchess of Montrose at seven o'clock. The evening was very dark. In the close lane under her park-pale and within 20 yards of the gate, a black figure on horseback pushed by between the chaise and the hedge on my side. I suspected it was a highwayman, and so I found did Lady Browne, for she was speaking and stopped. To divert her fears, I was just going to say 'Is not that the Apothecary going to the Duchess?' when I heard a voice cry 'Stop!' and the figure came back to the chaise. I had the presence of mind, before I let down the glass, to take off my watch and stuff it within my waistcoat under my arm. He said, 'Your purses and watches!' I replied, 'I have no watch.' 'Then your purse!' I gave it to him; it had nine guineas. It was so dark that I could not see his hand, but felt him take it. He then asked for Lady Browne's purse, and said, 'Don't be frightened; I will not hurt you!' I said, 'No; you won't frighten the lady?' He replied, 'No; I give you my word, I will do you no hurt.' Lady Browne gave him her purse, and was going to add her watch, but he said, 'I am much obliged to you! I wish you good-night!' pulled off his hat, and rode away. 'Well,' said I, 'Lady Browne, you will not be afraid of being robbed another time, for you see there is nothing in it!' 'Oh, but I am,' said she, 'and now I am in terrors lest he should return, for I have given him a purse with only bad money that I carry on purpose.'

¹ The vivacious Kitty (see Note on p. 61) had a round face, somewhat red. Lady Townshend (cf. p. 66) when shown over Strawberry Hill said maliciously 'that it would be a very pleasant place if Mrs Clive's face did not rise upon it and make it so hot.'

Tortoise-eye View

GILBERT WHITE TO HECKY MULSO

(*in persona Timothei*)

Selborne, 31 August, 1784

Most respectable Lady,

Your letter gave me great satisfaction, being the first that ever I was honoured with. It is my wish to answer you in your own way ; but I never could make a verse in my life, so you must be contented with plain prose. Having seen but little of this great world, conversed but little and read less, I feel myself much at a loss how to entertain so intelligent a correspondent. Unless you will let me write about myself, my answer will be very short indeed.

Know, then, that I am an American, and was born in the year 1734 in the Province of Virginia, in the midst of a savanna that lay between a large tobacco plantation and a creek of the sea. Here I spent my youthful days among my relations with much satisfaction, and saw around me many venerable kinsmen, who had attained to great ages, without any interruption from distempers. Longevity is so general among our species that a funeral is quite a strange occurrence. I can just remember the death of my great-great-grandfather, who departed this life in the 160th year of his age. Happy should I have been in the enjoyment of my native climate, and the society of my friends, had not a sea-boy, who was wandering about to see what he could pick up, surprised me as I was sunning myself under a bush ; and whipping me into his wallet, carried me aboard his ship. The circumstances of our voyage are not worthy a recital ; I only remember that the rippling of the water against the sides of our vessel as we sailed along was a very lulling and composing sound, which served to soothe my slumbers as I lay in the hold. We had a short voyage, and came to anchor on the coast of England in the harbour of Chichester. In that city, my kidnapper sold me for half-a-crown to a country gentleman, who came up to attend an election. I was immediately packed in a hand-basket, and carried, slung by the servant's side, to their place of abode. As they rode very hard for forty miles, and I had never been on horseback before, I found myself somewhat giddy from my airy jaunt. My purchaser, who was a great humorist, after showing me to some of his neighbours, and giving me the name of Timothy, took little further notice of me ; so I fell under the care of his lady, a benevolent woman, whose humane attention extended to the meanest of her retainers.

With this gentlewoman I remained almost forty years, living in a little walled-in court in the front of her house, and enjoying much quiet, and as much satisfaction as I could expect without society. At last this good old lady died in a very advanced old age, such as a tortoise would call a good old age ; and I then became the property of her nephew. This man, my present master, dug me out of my winter retreat, and packing me in a deal box, jumbled me eighty miles in postchaises to my present place of abode. I was sore shaken by this expedition, which was the worst journey I ever experienced. In my present situation I enjoy many advantages—such as the range of an extensive garden, affording a variety of sun and shade, and abounding in lettuces, poppies, kidney beans, and many other salubrious and delectable herbs and plants, and especially with a great choice of delicate gooseberries ! But still at times I miss my good old mistress, whose grave and regular deportment suited best with my disposition. For you must know that my master is what they call a naturalist, and much visited by people of that turn, who often put him on whimsical experiments, such as feeling my pulse, putting me in a tub of water to try if I can swim, etc., and twice in the year I am carried to the grocer's to be weighed, that it may be seen how much I am wasted during the months of my abstinence, and how much I gain by feasting in the summer. Upon these occasions I am placed in the scale on my back, where I sprawl about to the great diversion of the shopkeeper's children. These matters displease me ; but there is another that much hurts my pride ; I mean that contempt shown for my understanding which these Lords of the Creation are very apt to discover, thinking that nobody knows anything but themselves. I heard my master say that he expected that I should some day tumble down the ha-ha ; whereas I would have him to know that I can discern a precipice from plain ground as well as himself. Sometimes my master repeats with much seeming triumph the following lines, which occasion a loud laugh :

*Timotheus placed on high ¹
Amidst the tuneful choir,
With flying fingers touched the lyre.*

For my part I see no wit in the application, nor know whence the verses are quoted, perhaps from some prophet of his own, who, if he penned them for the sake of ridiculing tortoises, bestowed his pains.

¹ From Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*.

I think, to poor purposes. These are some of my grievances ; but they sit very light on me in comparison of what remains behind. Know, then, tender-hearted lady, that my greatest misfortune, and what I have never divulged to anyone before, is the want of society of my own kind. This reflection is always uppermost in my own mind, but comes upon me with irresistible force every spring. It was in the month of May last, that I resolved to elope from my place of confinement, for my fancy had represented to me that probably many agreeable tortoises of both sexes might inhabit the heights of Baker's Hill, or the extensive plains of the neighbouring meadow, both of which I could discern from the terrace. One sunny morning, therefore, I watched my opportunity, found the wicket open, eluded the vigilance of Thomas Hoar, and escaped into the saint-foin, which began to be in bloom, and thence into the beans. I was missing eight days, wandering in this wilderness of sweets, and exploring the meadow at times. But my pains were all to no purpose ; I could find no society such as I wished and sought for. I began to grow hungry, and to wish myself at home. I therefore came forth in sight, and surrendered myself up to Thomas, who had been inconsolable in my absence. Thus, Madam, have I given you a faithful account of my satisfactions and sorrows, the latter of which are mostly uppermost. You are a lady, I understand, of much sensibility. Let me therefore make my case your own in the following manner, and then you will judge of my feelings. Suppose you were to be kidnapped away *to-morrow*, in the bloom of your life, to the land of Tortoises, and were never to see again for fifty years a human face!!! Think on this, dear lady, and pity,

Your sorrowful Reptile,

TIMOTHY

Content in Provincial England

WILLIAM COWPER¹ TO MAJOR COWPER

Huntingdon, 18 October, 1765

. . . Here are three families who have received me with the utmost civility, and two in particular have treated me with as much cordiality

¹ The simple wants of Cowper's retired life are mirrored as naturally in his letters as in his gentle River Ouse. His prose style is unsurpassed in lucid ease, though one critic, Lytton Strachey, stresses his limitations : 'The letters of Cowper, though they rank high in English Literature, do not require much

as if their pedigree and mine had grown upon the same sheep-skin. Besides these, there are three or four single men who suit my temper to a hair. The town is one of the neatest in England ; the country is fine for several miles about it ; and the roads, which are all turnpike, and strike out four or five different ways, are perfectly good all the year round. I mention this latter circumstance chiefly because my distance from Cambridge has made a horseman of me at last, or at east is likely to do so. My brother and I meet every week, by an alternate reciprocation of intercourse, as Sam Johnson would express it ; sometimes I get a lift in a neighbour's chaise, but generally ride. As to my own personal condition, I am much happier than the day is long, and sunshine and candlelight see me perfectly contented. I get books in abundance, as much company as I choose, a deal of *comfortable leisure*, and enjoy better health, I think, than for many years past. What is there wanting to make me happy? Nothing if I can but be as thankful as I ought ; and I trust that He who has bestowed so many blessings upon me, will give me gratitude to crown them all.

' Mountains, Valleys . . . Ducks and Dab-chicks '

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

Olney, 3 May, 1780

Dear Sir,

You indulge me in such a variety of subjects, and allow me such a latitude of excursion in this scribbling employment, that I have no excuse for silence. I am much obliged to you for swallowing such boluses as I send you for the sake of my gilding, and verily believe that I am the only man alive, from whom they would be welcome to a palate like yours. I wish I could make them more splendid than they are, more alluring to the eye, at least, if not more pleasing to the taste ; but my leaf-gold is tarnished, and has received such a tinge from the vapours that are ever brooding over my mind, that I think it no small proof of your partiality to me that you will read my letters. I am not fond of longwinded metaphors ; I have always observed, that they halt at the latter end of their progress, and so do mine. I deal much in

comment. As far as they go, they are perfect, but they hardly go anywhere at all they . . . lack the juices of life.' Still, we read such things as the escape of his hare (p. 78) and marvel at the perfection of his familiar writing, the genial progress of an entirely unaffected mind.

ink indeed, but not such ink as is employed by poets, and writers of essays. Mine is a harmless fluid, and guilty of no deceptions but such as may prevail without the least injury to the person imposed on. I draw mountains, valleys, woods, and streams, and ducks, and dab-chicks. I admire them myself, and Mrs. Unwin¹ admires them, and her praise and my praise put together are fame enough for me. O! I could spend whole days and moonlight nights in feeding upon a lovely prospect! My eyes drink the rivers as they flow. If every human being upon earth could think for one quarter of an hour as I have done for many years, there might perhaps be many miserable men among them, but not an unawakened one would be found from the arctic to the antarctic circle. At present, the difference between them and me is greatly to their advantage. I delight in baubles, and know them to be so ; for, viewed without a reference to their Author, what is the earth—what are the planets—what is the sun itself, but a bauble? Better for a man never to have seen them, or to see them with the eyes of a brute, stupid and unconscious of what he beholds, than not to be able to say, ‘The Maker of all these wonders is my friend!’ Their eyes have never been opened, to see that they are trifles ; mine have been, and will be till they are closed for ever. They think a fine estate, a large conservatory, a hothouse rich as a West Indian garden things of consequence, visit them with pleasure, and muse upon them with ten times more. I am pleased with a frame of four lights, doubtful whether the few pines it contains will ever be worth a farthing ; amuse myself with a greenhouse, which Lord Butc’s gardener could take upon his back, and walk away with it ; and when I have paid it the accustomed visit, and watered it, and given it air, I say to myself—‘This is not mine, ’tis a plaything lent me for the present, I must leave it soon.’

Familiar Epic

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

Olney, 21 August, 1780

The following occurrence ought not to be passed over in silence, in a place where so few notable ones are to be met with. Last

¹ The Unwins were friends with whom Cowper lived. He accompanied Mrs Unwin in her widowhood to Olney where Newton was curate.

Wednesday night, while we were at supper, between the hours of eight and nine, I heard an unusual noise in the back parlour, as if one of the hares was entangled, and endeavouring to disengage herself. I was just going to rise from table, when it ceased. In about five minutes, a voice on the outside of the parlour door inquired if one of my hares had got away. I immediately rushed into the next room, and found that my poor favourite Puss had made her escape. She had gnawed in sunder the strings of a lattice work, with which I thought I had sufficiently secured the window, and which I preferred to any other sort of blind, because it admitted plenty of air. From thence I hastened to the kitchen, where I saw the redoubtable Thomas Freeman, who told me that, having seen her just after she had dropped into the street, he attempted to cover her with his hat, but she screamed out, and leaped directly over his head. I then desired him to pursue as fast as possible, and added Richard Coleman to the chase, as being nimbler and carrying less weight than Thomas ; not expecting to see her again, but desirous to learn, if possible, what became of her. In something less than an hour, Richard returned, almost breathless, with the following account. That, soon after he began to run, he left Tom behind him and came in sight of a most numerous hunt of men, women, children, and dogs ; that he did his best to keep back the dogs, and presently outstripped the crowd, so that the race was at last disputed between himself and Puss : she ran right through the town, and down the lane that leads to Dropshot. A little before she came to the house, he got the start and turned her ; she pushed for the town again, and soon after she entered it, sought shelter in Mr. Wagstaff's tanyard, adjoining to old Mr. Drake's. Sturge's harvest men were at supper, and saw her from the opposite side of the way. There she encountered the tanpits full of water, and while she was struggling out of one pit, and plunging into another, and almost drowned, one of the men drew her out by the ears, and secured her. She was then well washed in a bucket to get the lime out of her coat, and brought home in a sack at ten o'clock.

This frolic cost us four shillings, but you may believe that we did not grudge a farthing of it. The poor creature received only a little hurt in one of her claws and one of her ears, and is now almost as well as ever.

I do not call this an answer to your letter, but such as it is I send it, presuming upon that interest which I know you take in my minutest

concerns, which I cannot express better than in the words of Terence a little varied—*Nihil mei a te alienum putas*.¹

The Candidate

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

Olney, 29 March, 1784

... We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window ; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys halloo'd, and the maid announced ' Mr Grenville '. Puss was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window, than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr Grenville, advancing toward me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr Ashburner, the draper, addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is

¹ ' You will think nothing of mine foreign to you,' variation upon *Homo sum ; humani nihil a me alienum puto*, Terence, *Heauton*, I, i. 25. The sentiment is one that good letter-writers may find in the cordial phrase : *l'égoïsme à plusieurs*.

very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a riband from his buttonhole. The boys halloo'd, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued, and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world, where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, however, seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the country, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr Ashburner perhaps was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr Grenville that I had three heads, I should not I suppose have been bound to produce them. . . .

Election Scene—and a Valiant Draper

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

Olney, 26 April, 1784

My Dear Friend,

. . . The candidates for this county have set an example of economy which other candidates would do well to follow, having come to an agreement on both sides to defray the expenses of their voters, but to open no houses for the entertainment of the rabble ; a reform however which the rabble did not at all approve of and testified their dislike of it by a riot. A stage was built, from which the orators had designed to harangue the electors. This became the first victim of their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers, the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault, like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn to which they

had fled ; and a fear prevailing that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about and endeavour to secure them. At that instant a rioter, dressed in a merry andrew's jacket, stepped forward and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption. Mr. Ashburner was he. Seizing him by the throat, he shook him,—he threw him to the earth, he made the hollowness of his skull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody without the least damage to his person. Animated by this example, the other freeholders followed it : and in five minutes twenty-eight out of thirty ragamuffins were safely lodged in gaol.

Adieu, my dear friend ; we love you, and are yours.

'Trowsers' Do Not Make a Sailor

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

Olney, 24 September, 1785

. . . I remember Southampton well, having spent much time there ; but, though I was young, and had no objections on the score of conscience either to dancing or cards, I never was in the assembly-room in my life. I never was fond of company, and especially disliked it in the country. A walk to Netley Abbey, or to Freemantle, or to Redbridge, or a book by the fireside, had always more charms for me than any other amusement that the place afforded. I was also a sailor, and being of Sir Thomas Hesketh's party, who was himself born one, was often pressed into the service. But though I gave myself an air, and wore trowsers, I had no genuine right to that honour, disliking much to be occupied in great waters, unless in the finest weather. How they contrive to elude the wearisomeness that attends a sea life, who take long voyages, you know better than I ; but, for my own part, I seldom have sailed so far as from Hampton river to Portsmouth, without feeling the confinement irksome, and sometimes to a degree that was almost insupportable. There is a certain perverseness, or which I believe all men have a share, but of which no man has a larger share than I ; I mean that temper, or humour, or whatever it is to be called, that indisposes us to a situation, though not unpleasant in itself, merely because we cannot get out of it. I could not endure the room in which I now write, were I conscious that the door were locked. In

less than five minutes I should feel myself a prisoner, though I can spend hours in it under an assurance that I may leave it when I please without experiencing any tedium at all. It was for this reason, I suppose, that the yacht was always disagreeable to me. Could I have stepped out of it into a cornfield or a garden, I should have like it well enough, but being surrounded by water, I was as much confined in it as if I had been surrounded by fire, and did not find that it made me any adequate compensation for such an abridgement of my liberty. I make little doubt but Noah was glad when he was enlarged from the ark ; and we are sure that Jonah was, when he came out of the fish ; and so was I to escape from the good sloop the *Harriet*. . . .

Believe me, my dear friend,

With true affection, yours,

W. C.

Affectionate Joys Astir in Olney

WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH

(i)

Olney, 9 February, 1786

My Dearest Cousin,

. . . Your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks, everything that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors, but we could easily accommodate them all, though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son, all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats ; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and hedge of honeysuckles, roses and jasmine ; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the

box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present. But he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author ; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made ; but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament ; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. . . .

(ii)

12 June, 1786

. . . I approve altogether, my cousin beloved, of your sending your goods to the waggon on Saturday, and cookee by the coach on Tuesday. She will be here perhaps by four in the afternoon, at the latest by five, and will have quite time enough to find out all the cupboards and shelves in her department before you arrive. But I declare and protest that cookee shall sleep that night at our house, and get her breakfast here next morning. You will break her heart, child, if you send her into a strange house where she will find nothing that has life but the curate, who has not much neither. Servant he keeps none. A woman makes his bed, and after a fashion as they say, dresses his dinner, and then leaves him to his lucubrations. I do therefore insist on it, and so does Mrs. Unwin, that cookee shall be our guest for that time ; and from this we will not depart. I tell thee besides, that I shall be more glad to see her, than ever I was in my life to see one whom I never saw before. Guess why, if you can.

You must number your miles fifty-six instead of fifty-four. The fifty-sixth mile ends but a few yards beyond the vicarage. Soon after you shall have entered Olney, you will find an opening on your right hand. It is a lane that leads to your dwelling. There your coach may stop and set down Mrs. Eaton ; when she has walked about forty yards she will spy a green gate and rails on her left hand ; and when she has opened the gate and reached the house-door, she will find herself at home. But we have another manœuvre to play off upon you, and in which we positively will not be opposed, or if we are, it shall be to no purpose. I have an honest fellow that works in my garden-

his name is Kitchener, and we call him Kitch for brevity. He is sober, and as trusty as the day. He has a smart blue coat, that when I had worn it some years, I gave him, and he has now worn it some years himself. I shall set him on horseback, and order him to the Swan at Newport, there to wait your arrival, and if you should not stop at that place, as perhaps you may not, immediately to throw himself into suite, and to officiate as your guide. For though the way from Newport hither is short, there are turnings that might puzzle your coachman ; and he will be of use too, in conducting you to our house, which otherwise you might not easily find, partly through the stupidity of those from whom you might enquire, and partly from its out-of-the-way situation. My brother drove up and down Olney in quest of us, almost as often as you up and down Chancery Lane in quest of the Madans, with fifty boys and girls at his tail, before he could find us. The first man, therefore, you should see in a blue coat with white buttons, in the famous town of Newport, cry Kitch! He will immediately answer, My Lady! and from that moment you are sure not to be lost.

Your house shall be as clean as scrubbing and dry rubbing can make it, and in all respects fit you to receive. My friend the Quaker, in all that I have seen of his doings, has acquitted himself much to my satisfaction. Some little things, he says, will perhaps be missing at first, in such a multiplicity, but they shall be produced as soon as called for. Mrs. U. has bought you six ducks, and is fatting them for you. She has also rummaged up a coop that will hold six chickens, and designs to people it for you by the first opportunity ; for these things are not to be got fit for the table at Olney. Thus, my dear, are all things in the best train possible, and nothing remains that but you come and show yourself.

The Omnibus Epitaph

WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, 27 November, 1787

... On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and being desired to sit, spoke as follows : ' Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All Saints, in Northampton ; brother of Mr. Cox the upholsterer. It is

customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You would do me a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me with one.' To this I replied, 'Mr. Cox, you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, Cox the statuary, who, everybody know, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose.' 'Alas! Sir, I have heretofore borrowed help from him, but he is a gentleman of so much reading, that the people of our town cannot understand him.' I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, 'Perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too for the same reason.' But, on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my Muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and, pitying the poor man's distress, which appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The waggon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary style. A fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one*, that serves *two hundred* persons. . . .

Table Dentistry

WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH

(i)

19 December, 1787

. . My toothache is in a great measure, that is to say, almost entirely removed ; not by snipping my ears, as poor Lady Strange's ears were snipped, nor by any other chirurgical operation, except such as I could perform myself. The manner of it was as follows : we dined last Thursday at the Hall ; I sat down to table, trembling lest the tooth, of which I told you in my last, should not only refuse its own office, but hinder all the rest. Accordingly, in less than five minutes, by a hideous dislocation of it, I found myself not only in great pain, but under an absolute prohibition not only to eat, but to speak another word. Great emergencies sometimes meet the most effectual remedies. I resolved, if it were possible, then and there to draw it. This I effected so dexterously by a sudden twitch, and afterwards so dexterously

conveyed it into my pocket, that no creature present, not even Mrs. Unwin, who sat facing me, was sensible either of my distress, or of the manner of my deliverance from it. I am poorer by one tooth than I was, but richer by the unimpeded use of all the rest. . . .

(ii)

24 December, 1787

The Throcks do not leave Weston till after Easter. But this I hope will have no effect upon your movements, should an opportunity present itself to you of coming sooner. We dined there last Saturday. After dinner, while we all sat round the fire, I told them, as I related it to you, the adventure of my tooth. This drew from Mrs. Throck (singular as it must appear) a tale the very counterpart of mine. She, in like manner, had a tooth to draw, while I was drawing mine ; and thus it came to pass (the world, I suppose, could not furnish such another instance) that we two, without the least intimation to each other of our respective distress, were employed in the same moment, sitting side by side, in drawing each a tooth : an operation which we performed with equal address, and without being perceived by any one. . . .

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY TO THE INHABITANTS OF BIRMINGHAM, WHO
HAD WRECKED HIS HOUSE

London, 19 July, 1791

My Late Townsmen and Neighbours,

You have destroyed the most truly valuable and useful apparatus of philosophical instruments that perhaps any individual, in this or any other country, was ever possessed of, in my use of which I annually spent large sums with no pecuniary view whatever, but only in the advancement of Science, for the benefit of my country and mankind. You have destroyed the Library corresponding to that apparatus, which no money can re-purchase, except in a long course of time. But what I feel far more, you have destroyed manuscripts which have been the result of the laborious study of many years, and which I shall never be able to recompose : and this has been done to one who never did, or imagined, you any harm. . . .

In this business we are the sheep, and you the wolves. We will preserve our character and hope you will change yours. At all events

we return you blessings for curses, and pray that you may soon return to that industry and those sober manners for which the inhabitants of Birmingham were formerly distinguished.

*A Boy in Trouble*¹

EDWARD GIBBON TO HIS AUNT, MISS CATHERINE PORTEN

February, 1755

I have at length good news to tell you ; I am now a good Protestant, and am extremely glad of it. I have in all my letters taken notice of the different movements of my mind. Entirely Catholic when I came to Lausanne, wavering long time between the two systems, and at last fixed for the Protestant. . . .

Could I leave off here I should be very glad, but I have another piece of news to acquaint you with. Mr. Pavilliard has already hinted it in the letter you have, I suppose, already received, and which I have translated into English. Let me tell you the whole fact as it is really past.

One evening I went to see Mr. Gee, one of the English now here. I found him in his room, playing at Pharaon with some other gentlemen. I would have retired, but he desiring me to stay, I took a chair and sat down by the fire. I continued to look at the gamesters about half an hour, till one of them going away, Gee desired me to take his place, and I refused ; but on his assuring me that I might punt as low as I would, at last complied, and soon lost about half a guinea ; this vexed me, and I continued upon my word. The play warmed, and about three o'clock the next morning I found I had lost only forty guineas. Guess my situation (which I did not dare communicate to any one) ; such a loss, and an utter impossibility of paying it. I took the worst party I could. I demanded my revenge ; they gave it me, and the second meeting was still worse than the first. It cost me 1760 francs, or 110 guineas.

Never have I felt a despair equal to that I had then. I was a great while hesitating upon the most violent parties. At last I resolved to go

¹ Young Gibbon's appeal for funds was endorsed, in the handwriting of his stepmother : ' Pray remember this letter was addressed not to his mother-in-law (*sic*) but to his aunt, an old cat as she was to refuse his request.'

seek my money in England, not doubting to be able to raise that sum at London. I had not forgot that step would expose me to all the indignation of my father, but I shut my eyes on all those considerations, to reflect that it was my only resource to pay my debt and to disengage my word ; in pursuance of this, I bought a horse, a watch, and some other things of Mr. Gee himself, payable with the rest in England, and set out proposing to sell those things to carry me on my journey. Was successful as far as Geneva, but there the difficulty I found to dispose of my horse having stopped me some days, Pavilliard, who had perceived my evasion, ran after me, and half entreaties, half force, brought me back to Lausanne with him.

I am there at present, not knowing what to do ; the term given me almost out, and my creditors extremely pressing. What party can I take? Should I acquaint my father with it? What first-fruits of a conversion should I give him? I have then no other resource than you. Tell me not you are poor, that you have not enough for yourself. I do not address myself to you as the richest, but as the kindest of my relations ; nor do I ask it you as a gift, but as a loan. If you could not furnish me the whole sum, let me have at least a part of it. I know you have thoughts of doing something for me by your will ; I beg you only to anticipate it. I shall make no use of any other prayers than this plain recite of my situation ; if it produces no effect on you, nothing else would. Remember only that my term finished March 15. I tremble for your answer, but beg it may be speedy. I am too much agitated to go on. I will tell you something of myself in my next, *i.e.* very soon.

I am, dear Kitty,
Your unfortunate nephew,

E. GIBBON

A Clear-headed Son

EDWARD GIBBON TO HIS FATHER

1760

An address in writing, from a person who has the pleasure of being with you every day, may appear singular. However, I have preferred this method, as upon paper I can speak without a blush, and be heard without interruption. If my letter displeases you, impute it, Dear Sir, only to yourself. You have treated me not like a son, but like a friend.

Can you be surprized that I should communicate to a friend all my thoughts, and all my desires? Unless the friend approve them, let the father never know them ; or at least, let him know at the same time, that however reasonable, however eligible, my scheme may appear to me, I would rather forget it for ever, than cause him the slightest uneasiness.

When I first returned to England, attentive to my future interest, you were so good as to give me hopes of a seat in Parliament. . . . This design flattered my vanity, as it might enable me to shine in so august an assembly. It flattered a nobler passion ; I promised myself that by the means of this seat I might be one day the instrument of some good to my country. But I soon perceived how little a mere virtuous inclination, unassisted by talents, could contribute towards that great end ; and a very short examination discovered to me, that those talents were not fallen to my lot. Do not, Dear Sir, impute this declaration to a false modesty, the meanest species of pride. Whatever else I may be ignorant of, I think I know myself, and shall always endeavour to mention my good qualities without vanity, and my defects without repugnance. I shall say nothing of the most intimate acquaintance with his country and language, so absolutely necessary to every Senator. Since they may be acquired, to allege my deficiency in them, would seem only the plea of laziness. But I shall say with great truth, that I never possessed that gift of speech, the first requisite of an Orator, which use and labour may improve, but which nature can alone bestow. That my temper, quiet, retired, somewhat reserved, could neither acquire popularity, bear up against opposition, nor mix with ease in the crowds of public life. That even my genius (if you will allow me any) is better qualified for the deliberate compositions of the Closet, than for the extemporaneous discourses of the Parliament. An unexpected objection would disconcert me ; and as I am incapable of explaining to others what I do not thoroughly understand myself, I should be meditating, while I ought to be answering. I even want necessary prejudices of party, and of nation. In popular assemblies, it is often necessary to inspire them ; and never Orator inspired well a passion, which he did not feel himself. Suppose me even mistaken in my own Character ; to set out with the repugnance such an opinion must produce, offers but an indifferent prospect. But I hear you say, It is not necessary that every man should enter into Parliament with such exalted hopes. It is to acquire a title the most glorious of any in a free country, and to employ the weight and consideration it gives in the service of one's

friends. Such motives, though not glorious, yet are not dishonourable ; and if we had a borough in our command, if you could bring me in without any great expense, or if our fortune enabled us to despise that expense, then indeed I should think them of the greatest strength. But with our private fortune is it worth while to purchase at so high a rate, a title, honourable in itself, but which I must share with every fellow that can lay out Fifteen hundred pounds? Besides, Dear Sir, a merchandise is of little value to the owner, when he is resolved not to sell it.

I should affront your penetration, did I not suppose you now see the drift of this letter. It is to appropriate to another use the sum you destined to bring me into Parliament ; to employ it, not in making me great, but in rendering me happy. I have often heard you say yourself, that the allowance you had been so indulgent as to grant me, though very liberal in regard to your estate, was yet but small, when compared with the almost necessary extravagances of the age. I have indeed found it so, notwithstanding a good deal of economy, and an exemption from many of the common expenses of youth. This, Dear Sir, would be a way of supplying these deficiencies, without any additional expense to you.—But I forbear.—If you think my proposals reasonable, you want no entreaties to engage you to comply with them ; if otherwise, all will be without effect.

Two Passages from the Journey Home

FROM THE HON MARIA HOLROYD¹ TO EDWARD GIBBON

(i)

Berne, 7 October, 1791

. . . We are eighteen Leagues from Lausanne, and I have made the family lift up their hands and eyes in astonishment, by wishing to walk back that distance. . . . If you wish to know how we amused ourselves on the road, I will tell you, by meditation and silence. If you wish to know what was the subject of our meditations I will answer for myself—Lausanne. Indeed, my thoughts have not quitted that place, for five minutes, and I begin to wonder, whether I shall ever think of any thing

¹ *Maria Holroyd*, a very lively letter-writer, daughter of Gibbon's great friend Lord Sheffield, was at this time twenty years of age.

else. Our horse, that had one wooden and one broken leg, fell down, and rather damaged a third leg—so that, as Papa thought if any accident should happen to the fourth, we might find some difficulty in proceeding on our journey, and being rather indignant at their slow method of moving, he has dismissed them, rather too precipitately, as we are now uncertain whether we shall leave this Town tomorrow or a fortnight hence. No horses to be had at present. . . .

(ii)

Coblentz, 21 October, 1791

Our adventures since I wrote from Strasbourg have been very numerous, and if every body had been equally disposed with myself to be entertained with them, they would have lost much of their unpleasant circumstances. Papa had determined to go from Strasbourg to Mannheim to Rastadt ; but the Innkeeper advised us to go on the other side of the Rhine, as we should find the Inns all full in Germany and the post horses very bad. The rain was incessant all day and had continued for two days before. We found the roads very bad and lost our way in a large forest ; quite dark ; amidst many ejaculations from Mama. When we at last arrived at Girmenheim, where we were to sleep, we found the Inn quite full. A Commission was there from Mannheim to keep the Rhine in order, who has heard so much lately of liberty on both sides, that he had a mind to make the experiment, and has strayed over the neighbouring meadows, unmindful of the excellent caution given to a brother river—‘Thames, ever while you live. Keep between your banks.’ We were put into a small room, where a company had just finished supper. Travellers are not often, I imagine, so unfortunate as to go that road, if I may judge from the astonishment and, I hope, admiration our appearance caused. The doors were opened and the room was lined with spectators, who gazed at us in silence for near a quarter of an hour—more to my amusement than Mama’s. There was only one room where we could sleep—and we *all* arranged ourselves in three beds, after having quieted some delicate scruples of Papa’s, who proposed sleeping in the coach—however by putting out the candles nobody found it necessary to blush. . . .

Butchery by the Rabble

THE HON MARIA HOLROYD TO EDWARD GIBBON

Sheffield Place, November, 1792

... I am much flattered that you should desire to hear from me, and should have sent you the horrid account of the massacre *aux Carmes* before, if I had thought you would have been desirous of it. I have not seen the details in any newspaper, and one of the eight priests, who dined here, and had escaped from the massacre, related the whole with such simplicity and feeling, as to leave no doubt of the truth of all he said.

On the 2nd of Sep^{ber} they went into the garden, as usual, to walk at five o'clock in the evening. They expressed their surprise at several large pits, which had been digging for two or three days past. They said to each other, 'The day is almost spent, and yet Manuel told a person who interceded for us, last Thursday, that on the Sunday following not one should remain in captivity—we are still prisoners.' Soon after, they heard shouts, and some musquet shots were fired into the Garden. A number of National Guards, some Commissaires *de Sections*, and several Marseillois, rushed in. The unhappy victims who were dispersed about the garden, assembled under the walls of the church, not daring to enter, least it should be polluted with blood. One, who was behind the rest, was shot dead. *Point de coups de fusil* said some of the chiefs of the assassins, thinking this death too merciful. A number of them called for the Archbishop of Arles, and insisted that he should be given up to them, the Priests all crowded round him, and determined to defend him with their lives. The Archbishop then said, 'Let me pass; if we must all perish, it is of little consequence whether I die first or not, and if my death will appease them, is it not my duty to preserve your lives at the expense of my own?' He asked the eldest of the priests to give him absolution—he knelt to receive it, and when he rose, advanced, with his arms crossed on his breast, towards the people. His appearance was so dignified and noble, that for ten minutes not one of these wretches had courage to raise their hand against him. They reproached each other with cowardice and advanced—one look from the venerable Prelate struck them with involuntary awe, and they retired. At last, one of the assassins struck off his cap with a pike—their fury returned when they saw respect once violated, and another struck him on the head with a sabre, and laid

open his scalp. The Archbishop only said, 'O mon Dieu!' and put up his right hand to his eyes. A second blow cut off his hand—he repeated his exclamation and raised the other. A third stroke left him sitting, and a fourth extended him lifeless, when all the miscreants pressed forwards, to bury their poniards in his bosom.

The priests all agreed that the Archbishop of Arles was one of the most amiable men in France—his only *crime* was having parted with most of his private fortune to support the necessitous clergy of his diocese, since the beginning of the Revolution. When he was murdered, the National Guards made all the priests go into the church, telling them they should appear, one after another, before the *Commissaires du Section*, who would try them and determine their fate. They had hardly entered, before the people impatiently called for them to show themselves—upon which, all kneeling before the Altar, they received Absolution from the Bp of Beauvais—and then, two by two, passed before one of the *commissaires*, who did not question, but only counted his victims. In this manner, perished 120 priests amongst whom were the Bishops of Beauvais and Xaintes, both of the Rochefoucauld family. *Our friends* escaped by getting over the wall. . . .

A Lively Port after Storm

LORD COLLINGWOOD TO J. E. BLACKETT

Excellent—Ajaccio, Corsica

14 March, 1796

. . . On the night of the 27th of February, in a squall, when it was very dark and rainy, the *Princess Royal* ran on board of us. I was on deck, and luckily saw her coming right on us time enough to sheer off a little, or she would probably have cut us down to the water's edge: as it was, she carried away the bowsprit and foremast, and left us a complete wreck. It was fortunate that we got clear so soon; for there was sea enough to thump our sides in. We had scarce cleared ourselves of the wreck of our masts, before a hard gale of wind came on at S.E., setting us into the Gulf of Lyons on a lee shore. The fleet kept company with us as long as it was safe for them to do so, and then left a frigate to attend us. After many attempts to get her head round, we at last accomplished it, and the following day (1st March)

got up jury masts and made for this port ; but had another violent gale, in which we were in imminent danger of losing all the masts that remained. We got in on the 3d ; and since that time, my cares and anxiety to get ready have really been very painful to me.

I have been forty-eight hours on deck, and scarce sat in that time to eat. I am not much the fatter for it, nor a bit the worse, thanks to a good hard constitution. I have now replaced my lost masts, and hope to be ready again for the sea in about a week. This part of Corsica is still more barbarous than San Fiorenzo : the least offence offered to one of the inhabitants is resented by a stab, or a shot from behind a wall. Yesterday one of them stabbed another in the public square, and walked away, wiping his dagger, while no one attempted to stop him, or seemed to think it a violent measure, concluding, I suppose, that he had a good reason for what he did. Some bad carpenters were discharged from the yard on Saturday, because they were not wanted, and on Sunday morning they took a shot at Commissioner Coffin, as he walked in his garden, but missed him.

*A Letter that Contradicts the Popular Saying
' Sailors Don't Care '*

LORD COLLINGWOOD TO LADY COLLINGWOOD

Ocean, 16 June, 1806

This day, my love, is the anniversary of our marriage, and I wish you many happy returns of it. If ever we have peace, I hope to spend my latter days amid my family, which is the only sort of happiness I can enjoy.—After this life of labour, to retire to peace and quietness is all I look for in the world. Should we decide to change the place of our dwelling, our route would of course be to the southward of Morpeth ; but then I should be for ever regretting those beautiful views, which are nowhere to be exceeded ; and even the rattling of that old waggon that used to pass our door at 6 o'clock in a winter's morning had its charms. . . .

Have you read—but what I am more interested about, is your sister with you, and is she well and happy? Tell her—God bless her!—I wish I were with you, that we might have a good laugh. God bless me! I have scarcely laughed these three years. I am here, with a very reduced force, having been obliged to make detachments to all

quarters. This leaves me weak, while the Spaniards and French within are daily gaining strength. They have patched and pieced until they have now a very considerable fleet. Whether they will venture out I do not know : if they come, I have no doubt we shall do an excellent deed, and then I will bring them to England myself.

How do the dear girls go on? I would have them taught geometry, which is of all sciences in the world the most entertaining : it expands the mind more to the knowledge of all things in nature, and better teaches to distinguish between truths and such things as have the appearance of being truths, yet are not, than any other.

Their education, and the proper cultivation of the sense which God has given them, are the objects on which my happiness most depends. To inspire them with a love of everything that is honourable and virtuous, though in rags, and with contempt for vanity in embroidery, is the way to make them the darlings of my heart. They should not only read, but it requires a careful selection of books ; nor should they ever have access to two at the same time ; but when a subject is begun, it should be finished before anything else is undertaken. How would it enlarge their minds, if they should acquire a sufficient knowledge of mathematics and astronomy to give them an idea of the beauty and wonders of the creation! I am persuaded that the generality of people, and particularly fine ladies, only adore God because they are told it is proper and the fashion to go to church ; but I would have my girls gain such knowledge of the works of the creation, that they may have a fixed idea of the nature of that Being who could be the Author of such a world. Whenever they have that, nothing on this side the moon will give them much uneasiness of mind. I do not mean that they should be Stoics, or want the common feelings for the sufferings that the flesh is heir to ; but they would then have a source of consolation for the worst that could happen.

Tell me, how do the trees which I planted thrive? Is there shade under the three oaks for a comfortable summer seat? Do the poplars grow at the walk, and does the wall of the terrace stand firm? My bankers tell me that all my money in their hands is exhausted by fees on the peerage, and that I am in their debt, which is a new epoch in my life, for it is the first time I was ever in debt since I was a Midshipman. Here I get nothing ; but then my expenses are nothing, and I do not want it, particularly now that I have got my knives, forks, teapot, and the things you were so kind as to send me.

Salutations by the Sea

FANNY BURNEY¹ TO HER FATHER, DR BURNEY

Gloucester House, Weymouth,
13 July, 1789

His Majesty is in delightful health, and much improved spirits. All agree he never looked better. The loyalty of all this place is excessive ; they have dressed out every street with labels of ' God save the King ! ' all the shops have it over the doors ; all the children wear it in their caps, all the labourers in their hats, and all the sailors *in their voices*, for they never approach the house without shouting it aloud, nor see the King, or his shadow, without beginning to huzza, and going on to three cheers.

The bathing-machines make it their motto over all their windows ; and those bathers that belong to the royal dippers wear it in bandeaus on their bonnets, to go into the sea ; and have it again, in large letters, round their waists, to encounter the waves. Flannel dresses, tucked up, and no shoes or stockings, with bandeaus and girdles, have a most singular appearance ; and when first I surveyed these loyal nymphs it was with some difficulty I kept my features in order.

Nor is this all. Think but of the surprise of His Majesty when, the first time of his bathing, he had no sooner popped his royal head under water than a band of music, concealed in a neighbouring machine, struck up *God save great George our King*.

One thing, however, was a little unlucky ; when the Mayor and burgesses came with the address, they requested leave to kiss hands : this was graciously accorded ; but, the Mayor advancing, in a common way, *to take the Queen's hand*, as he might that of any Lady Mayoress, Colonel Gwynn, who stood by, whispered, ' You must kneel, sir.' He found, however, that he took no notice of this hint, but kissed the Queen's hand erect. As he passed him, in his way back, the Colonel said, ' You should have knelt, sir ! '

' Sir,' answered the poor Mayor, ' I cannot.'

' Everybody does, sir.'

' Sir—I have a wooden leg.'

¹ Celebrated for her *Evelina*, Johnson's lively young friend had at this time, through the influence of Mrs Delaney, become Second Keeper of the Robes, a court appointment that proved quite uncongenial.

Poor man! 'twas such a surprise! and such an excuse as no one could dispute.

But the absurdity of the matter followed ;—all the rest did the same ; taking the same privilege, by the example, without the same or any cause.

Her Natural Disposition

SARAH SIDDONS TO JOHN TAYLOR

Newnham Rectory, 5 August, 1793

Indeed, my dear friend, if you were to write my praises with the pen of men and angels, I should shrink from that celebrity which the partiality of so kind a biographer would confer : for how could I read without blushes those accounts of myself, which would be measures of his friendship, not standards of my worthiness? I am content that you should deceive yourself about my talents and my character, because I have an interest, and perhaps a livelier interest than most people, I believe, imagine, for the opinion of those who give themselves the trouble to think of me at all. But my friends in general are very much mistaken in my character. It has pleased God to place me in a situation of great publicity, but my natural disposition inclines me to privacy and retirement ; and, though the applause that is the Palm of Art is necessarily sweet to my sense, yet sweeter is the still small voice of tender relatives and estimable friends. You may therefore tell me as much as you please of those talents with which you say I am so miraculously gifted, and I will hear you with pleasure, and pray for continuance of your illusion. But do not—I conjure you, at least till opinion has a little more sanctioned the idea—do not bid all the world gaze, and wonder, and certainly laugh at my yet feeble efforts.

I am very much obliged to Mrs. Robinson for her polite attention in sending me her poems. Pray tell her so with my compliments. I hope the poor, charming woman has quite recovered from her fall. If she is half as amiable as her writings, I shall long for the possibility of being acquainted with her. I say the possibility, because one's whole life is one continued sacrifice of inclinations, which, to indulge, however laudable or innocent, would draw down the malice and reproach of those prudent people who never do ill, 'but feed, and sleep, and do observances, to the stale ritual of quaint ceremony.'

The charming and beautiful Mrs. Robinson! I pity her from the bottom of my soul!

Pray go and take Betsy to Marlborough Street, to see my bust of my little son George. I could have done it better, but for the extreme heat of the weather, which made the clay crack and dry too fast.

*The Poet Puts a Good Face on
'Inconveniences and Ills'*

ROBERT BURNS TO ROBERT AINSLIE

Ellisland, 1 November, 1789

... I do not know if I have informed you that I am now appointed to an excise division, in the middle of which my house and farm lie. In this I was extremely lucky. Without ever having been an expectant, as they call their journeymen excisemen, I was directly planted down to all intents and purposes an officer of excise; there to flourish and bring forth fruits—worthy of repentance.

I know not how the word exciseman, or still more opprobrious, gauger, will sound in your ears. I too have seen the day when my auditory nerves would have felt very delicately on this subject; but a wife and children are things which have a wonderful power in blunting these kind of sensations. Fifty pounds a year for life, and a provision for widows and orphans, you will allow is not bad settlement for a poet. For the ignominy of the profession, I have the encouragement which I once heard a recruiting sergeant give to a numerous, if not to a respectable, audience, in the streets of Kilmarnock.—'Gentlemen, for your further and better encouragement, I can assure you that our regiment is the most blackguard corps under the Crown, and consequently with us an honest fellow has the surest chance of preferment.'

You need not doubt that I find several very unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances in my business; but I am tired with and disgusted at the language of complaint against the evils of life. Human existence in the most favourable situations does not abound with pleasures, and has its inconveniences and ills; capricious foolish man mistakes these inconveniences and ills as if they were the peculiar property of his particular situation; and hence that eternal fickleness, that love of change, which has ruined, and daily does ruin many a fine fellow, as well as many a blockhead. . . .

Our Houses of Eternity

WILLIAM BLAKE TO JOHN FLAXMAN¹

Felpham, 21 September, 1800
Sunday morning

Dear Sculptor of Eternity,

We are safe arrived at our cottage, which is more beautiful than I thought it, and more convenient. It is a perfect model for cottages, and I think for palaces of magnificence, only enlarging not altering its proportions, and adding ornaments and not principles. Nothing can be more grand than its simplicity and usefulness. Simple without intricacy, it seems to be the spontaneous expression of humanity, congenial to the wants of man. No other formed house can ever please me so well, nor shall I ever be persuaded, I believe, that it can be improved either in beauty or use.

Mr Hayley received us with his usual brotherly affection. I have begun to work. Felpham is a sweet place for study, because it is more spiritual than London. Heaven opens here on all sides her golden gates : her windows are not obstructed by vapours ; voices of celestial inhabitants are more distinctly heard, and their forms more distinctly seen ; and my cottage is also a shadow of their houses. My wife and sister are both well, courting Neptune for an embrace.

Our journey was very pleasant ; and though we had a great deal of luggage, no grumbling. All was cheerfulness and good humour on the road, and yet we could not arrive at our cottage before half-past eleven at night, owing to the necessary shifting of our luggage from one chaise to another ; for we had seven different chaises and as many different drivers. We set out between six and seven in the morning of Thursday, with sixteen heavy boxes and portfolios full of prints.

And now begins a new life, because another covering of earth is shaken off. I am more famed in heaven for my works than I could well conceive. In my brain are studies and chambers filled with books and pictures of old, which I wrote and painted in ages of eternity before my mortal life ; and those works are the delight and study of archangels. Why then should I be anxious about the riches or fame of mortality? The Lord our Father will do for us and with us according to his divine will, for our good.

¹ Blake's friends named are Flaxman, sculptor ; Hayley, author and good patron ; Fuseli, Swiss painter ; and Johnson, the publisher.

You, O dear Flaxman! are a sublime archangel,—my friend and companion from eternity. In the divine bosom is our dwelling-place. I look back into the regions of reminiscence, and behold our ancient days before this earth appeared in its vegetated mortality to my mortal vegetated eyes. I see our houses of eternity which can never be separated, though our mortal vehicles should stand at the remotest corners of heaven from each other.

Farewell, my best friend! Remember me and my wife in love and friendship to our dear Mrs Flaxman, whom we ardently desire to entertain beneath our thatched roof of rusted gold.

*An Artist, in His Conscience, Looks Upon the Sea of
Time and Space*

WILLIAM BLAKE TO THOMAS BUTTS

Felpham, 10 January, 1802

. . . You have so generously and openly desired that I will divide my griefs with you that I cannot hide what it has now become my duty to explain. My unhappiness has arisen from a source which, if explored too narrowly, might hurt my pecuniary circumstances ; as my dependence is on engraving at present, and particularly on the engravings I have in hand for Mr. Hayley, and I find on all hands great objections to my doing anything but the mere drudgery of business, and intimations that, if I do not confine myself to this, I shall not live. This has always pursued me. You will understand by this the source of all my uneasiness. This from Johnson and Fuseli brought me down here and this from Mr. Hayley will bring me back again. For that I cannot live without doing my duty to lay up treasures in heaven is certain and determined, and to this I have long made up my mind. And why this should be made an objection to me, while drunkenness, lewdness, gluttony, and even idleness itself, does not hurt other men, let Satan himself explain. The thing I have most at heart—more than life, or all that seems to make life comfortable without—is the interest of true religion and science. And whenever anything appears to affect that interest (especially if I myself omit any duty to my station as a soldier of Christ), it gives me the greatest of torments. I am not ashamed, afraid, or averse to tell you what ought to be told—that I am under the direction of messengers from heaven, daily and nightly. But the nature

of such things is not, as some suppose, without trouble or care. Temptations are on the right hand and on the left. Behind, the sea of time and space roars and follows swiftly. He who keeps not right onwards is lost ; and if our footsteps slide in clay, how can we do otherwise than fear and tremble? But I should not have troubled you with this account of my spiritual state, unless it had been necessary in explaining the actual cause of my uneasiness, into which you are so kind as to inquire : for I never obtrude such things on others unless questioned, and then I never disguise the truth. But if we fear to do the dictates of our angels, and tremble at the tasks set before us ; if we refuse to do spiritual acts because of natural fears or natural desires ; who can describe the dismal torments of such a state!—I too well remember the threats I heard!—‘ If you, who are organized by Divine Providence for spiritual communion, refuse, and bury your talent in the earth, even though you should want natural bread,—sorrow and desperation pursue you through life, and after death shame and confusion of face to eternity. Every one in eternity will leave you, aghast at the man who was crowned with glory and honour by his brethren, and betrayed their cause to their enemies. You will be called the base Judas who betrayed his friend! ’—Such words would make any stout man tremble, and how then could I be at ease? But I am now no longer in that state, and now go on again with my task, fearless though my path is difficult. I have no fear of stumbling while I keep it. . . .

‘ I Therefore Took Him by the Elbows ’

WILLIAM BLAKE TO THOMAS BUTTS

Felpham, 16 August, 1803

. . . I am at present in a bustle to defend myself against a very unwarrantable warrant from a justice of peace at Chichester, which was taken out against me by a private in Captain Leathes’ troop of 1st or Royal Dragoons, for an assault and seditious words. The wretched man has terribly perjured himself, as has his comrade ; for, as to sedition, not one word relating to the King or Government was spoken by either him or me. His enmity arises from my having turned him out of my garden, into which he was invited as an assistant by a gardener at work therein, without my knowledge that he was so invited. I desired him, as politely as possible, to go out of the garden ; he made

me an impertinent answer. I insisted on his leaving the garden ; he refused. I still persisted in desiring his departure. He then threatened to knock out my eyes, with many an abominable imprecation, and with some contempt for my person ; it affronted my foolish pride. I therefore took him by the elbows, and pushed him before me till I had got him out. Then I intended to have left him ; but he, turning about, put himself into a posture of defiance, threatening and swearing at me. I, perhaps foolishly and perhaps not, stepped out of the gate, and, putting aside his arms, took him again by the elbows, and, keeping his back to me, pushed him forward down the road about fifty yards—he all the while endeavouring to turn round and strike me, and raging and cursing, which drew out several neighbours. At length when I had got him to where he was quartered, which was very quickly done, we were met at the gate by the master of the house—the *Fox Inn*—(who is the proprietor of my cottage) and his wife and daughter, and the man's comrade, and several other people. My landlord compelled the soldiers to go indoors, after many abusive threats against me and my wife from the two soldiers ; but no word of threat on account of sedition was uttered at the time. This method of revenge was planned between them after they had got together into the stable. This is the whole outline. . . .

Strong Welcome to a Future Step-mother

MARIA EDGEWORTH TO MISS BEAUFORT

16 May, 1798

Whilst you, my dear Miss Beaufort, have been toiling in Dublin, my father has been delighting himself in preparations for June. The little boudoir looks as if it intends to be pretty. This is the only room in the house which my father will allow to be finished, as he wishes that your taste should finish the rest. Like the man who begged to have the eclipse put off, we have been here praying to have the spring put off, as this place never looks so pretty as when the lilacs and laburnums are in full flower. I fear, notwithstanding all our prayers, that their purple and yellow honours will be gone before your arrival. There is one other flower which I am sure will not be in blow for you, 'a little western flower called love in idleness'. Amongst the many kindnesses my father has shown me, the greatest, I think, has been his permitting me to see his heart *à découverte* ; and I have seen, by your kind sincerity and his, that in good and cultivated minds love is no *idle* passion, but one that inspires useful and generous energy. I have been

convinced by your example of what I was always inclined to believe, that the power of feeling affection is increased by the cultivation of the understanding. The wife of our Indian yogii (if a yogii be permitted to have a wife) might be a very affectionate woman, but her sympathy with her husband could not have a very extensive sphere. As his eyes are to be continually fixed upon the point of his nose, hers, in duteous sympathy, must squint in like manner ; and if the perfection of his virtue be to sit so still that the birds (*vide* Sacontala¹) may unmolested build nests in his hair, his wife cannot better show her affection than by yielding her tresses to them with similar patient stupidity. Are there not European yogiis, or men whose ideas do not go much further than *le bout du nez*? And how delightful it must be to be chained for better for worse to one of this species! I should guess—for I know nothing of the matter—that the courtship of an ignorant lover must be almost as insipid as a marriage with him ; for ‘my jewel’ continually repeated, without new setting, must surely fatigue a little.

You call yourself, dear Miss Beaufort, my friend and companion : I hope you will never have reason to repent beginning in this style towards me. I think you will not find me encroach upon you. The overflowings of your kindness, if I know anything of my own heart, will fertilise the land, but will not destroy the landmarks. I do not know whether I most hate or despise the temper which will take an ell where an inch is given. . . . In a stupid or indolent family your knowledge and talents would be thrown away ; here, if it may be said without vanity, they will be the certain source of your daily happiness. You will come into a new family, but you will not come as a stranger, dear Miss Beaufort ; you will not lead a new life, but only continue to lead the life you have been used to in your own happy, cultivated family.

‘*You Are Very Kind in Your Hints*’

JANE AUSTEN TO J. S. CLARKE

1 April, 1816

My dear Sir,—

I am honoured by the Prince’s thanks and very much obliged to yourself for the kind manner in which you mention the work. I have

¹ Sakuntala, a lovable character in Hindu mythology, heroine of a drama by Kalidasa (3rd Cent. A.D.), and mother of the first of the Bharata race of Kings. English version by Sir W. Jones, 1789.

also to acknowledge a former letter forwarded to me from Hans Place. I assure you I feel very grateful for the friendly tenor of it, and hope my silence will have been considered, as it was truly meant, to proceed only from an unwillingness to tax your time with idle thanks. Under every interesting circumstance which your own talents and literary labours have placed you in, by the favour of the Regent bestowed, you have my best wishes. Your recent appointments I hope are a step to something still better. In my opinion, the service of a court can hardly be too well paid, for immense must be the sacrifice of time and feeling required by it.

You are very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present, and I am fully sensible that an historical romance, founded on the House of Saxe Cobourg, might be much more to the purpose of profit and popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in. But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motives than to save my life ; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up, and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style, and go on in my own way, and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.

I remain, my dear Sir,
Your very obliged and sincere friend,

J. AUSTEN

The Strength of Originality

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH TO LADY BEAUMONT

Coleorton, 21 May, 1807

... My letter (as this second sheet, which I am obliged to take, admonishes me) is growing to an enormous length ; and yet, saving that I have expressed my calm confidence that these poems will live. I have said nothing which has a particular application to the object of it, which was to remove all disquiet from your mind on account of the condemnation they may at present incur from that portion of my contemporaries who are called the public. I am sure, my dear Lady Beaumont, if you attach any importance to it, it can only be from an apprehension that it may affect me, upon which I have already set

you at ease ; or from a fear that this present blame is ominous of their future or final destiny. If this be the case, your tenderness for me betrays you. Be assured that the decision of these persons has nothing to do with the question ; they are altogether incompetent judges. These people, in the senseless hurry of their idle lives, do not *read* books, they merely snatch a glance at them, that they may talk about them. And even if this were not so, never forget what, I believe, was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished ; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen ; this, in a certain degree, even to all persons, however wise and pure may be their lives, and however invitiated their taste. But for those who dip into books in order to give an opinion of them, or talk about them to take up an opinion—for this multitude of unhappy and misguided and misguiding beings, an entire regeneration must be produced ; and if this be possible, it must be a work of time. To conclude, my ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings ; and, after what I have said, I am sure yours will be the same. . . .

A Question of Titubancy

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE TO WILLIAM GODWIN

At Mr. Lamb's, 36, Chapel Street,
3 March, 1800

Dear Godwin,—The punch, after the wine, made me tipsy last night. This I mention, not that my head aches, or that I felt, after I quitted you, any unpleasantness or titubancy ; but because tipsiness has, and has always, one unpleasant effect—that of making me talk very extravagantly ; and as, when sober, I talk extravagantly enough for any common tipsiness, it becomes a matter of nicety in discrimination to know when I am or am not affected. An idea starts up in my head,—away I follow through thick and thin, wood and marsh, brake and briar, with all the apparent interest of a man who was defending one of his old and long-established principles. Exactly of this kind was the conversation with which I quitted you. I do not believe it possible for a human being to have a greater horror of the feelings that usually accompany such principles as I then supposed, or a deeper conviction

of their irrationality, than myself ; but the whole thinking of my life will not bear me up against the accidental crowd and press of my mind, when it is elevated beyond its natural pitch. We shall talk wiselier with the ladies on Tuesday. God bless you, and give your dear little ones a kiss apiece from me. Yours with affectionate esteem,

SIR WALTER SCOTT TO JAMES DUSAUTOY, A SCHOOLBOY POET OF 15, WHO ASKED FOR HIS OPINION ON SOME VERSES

Ashestiel, 6 May, 1811

. . . The friends who know me best, and to whose judgment I am in the constant habit of trusting, reckon me a very capricious and uncertain judge of poetry ; and I have had repeated occasions to observe that I have often failed in anticipating the reception of poetry from the public. Above all, Sir, I must warn you against suffering yourself to suppose that the power of enjoying natural beauty and poetical description are necessarily connected with that of producing poetry. The former is really a gift of Heaven, which conduces inestimably to the happiness of those who enjoy it. The second has much more of a knack in it than the pride of poets is always willing to admit ; and, at any rate, is only valuable when combined with the first. . . . I would also caution you against an enthusiasm which, while it argues an excellent disposition and feeling heart, requires to be watched, and restrained, though not repressed. It is apt, if too much indulged, to engender a fastidious contempt for the ordinary business of the world, and gradually to render us unfit for the exercise of the useful and domestic virtues which depend greatly upon our not exalting our feelings above the temper of well-ordered and well-educated society. No man can ever be happy when he is unfit for the career of simple and commonplace duty ; and I need not add how many melancholy instances there are of extravagance and profligacy being resorted to under pretence of contempt for the common rules of life.

Cultivate then, sir, your taste for poetry and the *belles-lettres*, as an elegant and most interesting amusement ; but combine it with studies of a more severe and solid cast, and such as are most intimately connected with your prospects in future life. In the words of Solomon : ' My son, get knowledge ' . . .

No Illusions as to His Hero

SIR WALTER SCOTT TO J. B. S. MORRITT

Edinburgh, 24 July, 1814

. . . I am heartily glad you continued to like *Waverley* to the end. The hero is a sneaking piece of imbecility ; and if he had married Flora, she would have set him up upon the chimney-piece, as Count Borowlaski's wife used to do with him. I am a bad hand at depicting a hero properly so called, and have an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of borderers, buccaneers, Highland robbers, and all others of a Robin-Hood description. I do not know why it should be, as I am myself, like Hamlet, indifferent honest ; but I suppose the blood of the old cattle-drivers of Teviotdale continues to stir in my

A Good Heart in Grave Adversity

SIR WALTER SCOTT TO JOHN MORRITT

Edinburgh, 6 February, 1826

My dear Morritt,

It is very true I have been, and am in danger, of a pecuniary loss,¹ and probably a very large one, which, in the uncertainty, I look at as to the full extent, being the manly way of calculating such matters, since one may be better, but can hardly be worse. I can't say I feel overjoyed at losing a large sum of hard-earned money in a most unexpected manner, for all men considered Constable's people secure as the Banker yet, as I have obtained an arrangement of payment convenient for every body concerned, and easy for myself, I cannot say that I care much about the matter. Some economical restrictions I will make ;

¹ The *pecuniary loss* refers to the crisis in which Scott's printing and publishing interests crashed. At 55, and failing in health, he found himself involved in liabilities to the tune of £130,000. He met adversity with leonine courage. 'I have made my matters public,' he writes to Lockhart (20.1.26), 'and have had splendid offers of assistance, all of which I have declined, for I would rather bear my own burden than subject myself to obligation. There is but one way in such cases. . . . A very odd anonymous offer I had of £30,000, which I rejected, as I did every other.' In the next two years he earned £40,000, but the strain was too great. Scott died, universally honoured, in 1832.

and it happened oddly that they were such as Lady Scott and myself had almost determined upon without this compulsion. Abbotsford will henceforth be our only establishment ; and during the time I must be in town, I will take my bed at the Albyn Club. We shall also break off the rather excessive hospitality to which we were exposed, and no longer stand host and hostess to all that do pilgrimage to Melrose. Then I give up an expensive farm, which I always hated, and turn all my odds and ends into cash. I do not reckon much on my literary exertions—I mean in proportion to former success because popular taste may fluctuate. But with a moderate degree of the favour which I have always had, my time my own, and my mind unplagued about other things, I may boldly promise myself soon to get the better of this blow.

In these circumstances, I should be unjust and ungrateful to ask or accept the pity of my friends. I for one, do not see there is much occasion for making moan about it. My womankind will be the greater sufferers,—yet even they look cheerily forward ; and, for myself, the blowing off my hat in a stormy day has given me more uneasiness.

I envy your Brighton party, and your fine weather. When I was at Abbotsford the mercury was down at six or seven in the morning more than once. I am hammering away at a bit of a story from the old affair of the *diablerie* at Woodstock in the Long Parliament times. I don't like it much. I am obliged to hamper my fanatics greatly, too much to make them effective ; but I make the sacrifice on principle ; so, perhaps, I shall deserve good success in other parts of the work. You will be surprised when I tell you that I have written a volume in exactly fifteen days. To be sure, I permitted no interruptions. But then I took exercise, and for ten days of the fifteen attended the Court of Session from two to four hours every day. This is nothing, however, to writing *Ivanhoe* when I had the actual cramp in my stomach ; but I have no idea of these things preventing a man from doing what he has a mind. One most laughable part of our tragic comedy was, that every friend in the world came formally, just as they do here when a relation dies, thinking that the eclipse of *les beaux yeux de ma cassette* ¹ was perhaps a loss as deserving of consolation.

¹ 'The bright eyes of my privy purse.'

Autres Temps

HARRIET CAVENDISH ¹ TO HER SISTER, GEORGIANA (LADY MORPETH)

15 January, 1803

. . . On Saturday I went to the opera with Lady Charlotte and Lady Mary.² They were as disagreeable as possible, talking loud enough for the whole house to hear, and when they chose to listen, crying *Hush*, with the voices of ballad singers. They had very few men in the box, only Mr Stopford and Gerald Wellesley. . . .

On Sunday we went to a sort of Assembly at Lady Melbourne's : it was not pleasant. The two Lambs, William ³ and Frederick, had dined out and were very *drunk*, and the former talked to me in a loud voice the whole time of the danger of a *young womans* believing in *weligion* and *pwactising mowality*. Miss Talbot was there doing the honours of her caricature, and without the least *mauvaise honte*, talking of it to every body.

Last night we went to hear the famous ventriloquist Fitzjames. It was very wonderful and entertaining.

It is quite determined that we are to go to the Priory ⁴ Friday. They

¹ The turn of the Century, and the style of Regency society, may be studied in the brilliant light of the two books from which the Ponsonby and the Cavendish letters are taken (see p. v). The lovable Hary-O, as she was called, seems to me a virtuosic letter-writer. She shows the restless flutter of a sophisticated circle ; but she kept a level balance of good heart and witty head that saved her completely from the vagaries of people like her cousin, Caroline Lamb, or Lord Byron.

The peace of the Eighteenth Century has gone. Lytton Strachey, drawing a good parallel between the younger Pliny and the older Pitt says : ' Did they not both feel their nectarines ripening in the sun in precisely the same leisurely aristocratic manner? ' But, with the Regency, tolerance has fallen to cynicism, scandal ripens quicker than peaches, and the male strength of Johnson's circle is succeeded by saucy ways and excited gossip. Then the boldness of Byron announces a new era : it is almost as if the poised vivacities of Walpole's age are beaten aside by the blade of Byron's vigour. The French Revolution has arrived.

Hary-O meanwhile sails through the perilous waters with her sophisticated virtue and her natural gaiety.

² Daughters of the Duke of Portland.

³ *William Lamb*, afterwards Lord Melbourne, married Harriet's eccentric cousin Caroline Ponsonby.

⁴ Lord Abercorn's house at Stanmore.

are to act 2 farces ; *Who's the dupe?*¹ and the *Wedding day*,² Lady Cahir,³ the chief characters, 'Lady Content' and 'Charlotte'. There are to be a great many people at it, some return to town at night, and others sleep at Stanmore, as the Priory will not hold half of them ; our party, consisting of papa (who has changed his mind and means to be present), mama, William Howard, 2 maids and myself, are allowed only *one* bedroom ; How we shall manage, *Dio sa*. . .

Regency Party

HARRIET CAVENDISH TO HER SISTER, GEORGINA (LADY MORPETH)

25 January, 1803

To Miladi Georgine Morpeth,

. . . Lord Whitworth says you are beloved and admired by everybody and conduct yourself, *as you always do*, with a prudence beyond your years. Lastly I have just received a note from Lady Charlotte Greville, who says she has just received letters from Paris, that her correspondents are in raptures and say you are like *une Vierge de Raphaël*. This, in case you should not be made vain enough without my assistance.

And now for my sufferings and misfortunes. I have been to the Priory and live to tell you of it. It was formidable, disagreeable, uncomfortable and *royal*, for to complete the misery, the Prince was there. We arrived to dinner there on Friday, an hour too soon, as we waited for the Westmorlands, who, after all, dined in their own rooms. Lady W. is really as mad as it is possible to be. Her clear and connected reasons for not dining with us were—'We lost our way dreadfully ; that is, we came quite right, but I fancied we should, which was as bad. I then *spilt a cup of milk*, and so it was quite impossible!'

¹ *Who's the Dupe?* by Hannah Cowley. (Drury Lane Comedy, 1779.)

² *Wedding Day*, by Elizabeth Inchbald. (Drury Lane, 1794.)

³ Lady Cahir's success in the amateur dramatics provides a period story. The lady (pronounced Cair) was openly engrossed in a serious flirtation and had special pleasure in directing to her husband the song :

*Begone, dull care,
Begone for ever from me.
Begone, dull care,
You and I can never agree.*

Lady Sarah looked as well as she could with a very swelled face which she got by a fall at Apthorpe. Lady Augusta is not altered, her face looked beautiful, but her figure bad and very high shouldered. Lady Sarah had only three *adornateurs* on her hands : Tom Sheridan, who acted despair, . . . Lord Craven, who seemed to think it the best joke that ever was and ready to die of laughing, and Lord Granville, seeming to have made a vow that he would take everything for the best, smiling with self congratulation when she turned her back, and walking about the room with looks of complacency and satisfaction when she was too much surrounded for him to get near her. She treated the three exactly alike, and weighed her words and smiles in the most exact proportion.

Lady Harriet Hamilton was in great beauty, but I hardly spoke to her. She seemed to me to be making a desperate attack upon Lord Foley, whom she talked and sung to from morning till night. Lady Charlotte Hamilton looked ill, pale and very much out of spirits.

The acting was excellent. Lady Cahir was good as Mrs. Jordan, and what surprised me, perfectly original. . . .

The Prince seemed pleased, and said, ' My dear Abercorn, I never enjoyed such perfect happiness in the whole course of my life.'

Lady Asgill was present and more ridiculous than ever. I sat next to her during the performance and in the Epilogue there was, *à l'ordinaire*, a compliment to the Ladies of the House. Lady Asgill, of course, took it to herself, and covering her face with her shawl, sunk upon the arm of my chair, quite overcome with modesty. . . .

In the morning we had a royal breakfast, at which I sat near three hours, only kept awake by dear delightful Lady Charlotte Lindsay. She was funnier than anything I ever heard.

Mrs. Kemble is the great favourite and she seems very pleasant and good humoured. Lord Abercorn was more endurable than I had expected, excepting that he gave me the headache with proclaiming each separate dish at dinner, and when he wanted to ask me a question, hollowing after me so loud that I was some minutes recovering the stun and my senses. . . .

Bath News

HARRIET CAVENDISH TO HER SISTER, GEORGIANA
(EXTRACT FROM A LONG LETTER)

22 November, 1803

... I saw Mrs. Bouverie and Mrs. Wilmot at Bristol today ; the former much better in health, but altered in beauty to having none at all, I think. Mrs. Wilmot's bark and wit as usual, but she is too constantly and evidently employed in flattering the one and sharpening the other to be very delightful. I do not either admire those riding-habit courageous ladies. If you think it will give you the head ache puzzling to find out the reason, pray do not trouble yourself. . . .

Bath news : Mr. George Glass is going to marry Miss Blacquiere. Messrs. Tully and George, shoemaker, no 1 Orange Grove, is making me a pair of half boots. Bristol news : General Tarleton is very unpopular—makes the volunteers wait—won't visit Mr. Pennyman the master of the ceremonies, to whose house I went today, took it for an inn and him for the waiter and behaved accordingly. General and Mrs. Tarleton are thought too conjugal, as they always sit on the same chair and eat out of the same plate. Doctor R., my oracle you see, saw the fact. Is it not going too far and quite nasty, to allow themselves but one plate?

I just now hear the watchman cry, ' Past 2 o'clock, a starlight morning.' I have not begun undressing. Oh fye!

The Impayable

HARRIET CAVENDISH TO HER SISTER GEORGIANA

November or December, 1803

... Write to me, even on the tiny sheet, though I am obliged to read them as one goes up stairs—2 steps forward and 1 back not to have done too soon. May I be remembered to Lord Morpeth?

I forgot to tell you in the list of our acquaintances of a Mrs. Pennington, a *bergère* of about 50—her dress, person and conversation are *impayable*. The latter is eloquent and incessant beyond all powers of description and she talked mama and I the other morning into a sort of stupor ; of how Mrs. Randolph has a hand to execute what her head performed and her heart conceived ; and about Mama's illumined

smile, vivifying all around and beaming the rays of a mind . . . *je m'y perds*—but imagine this under a flaxen wig, gipsy hat, *mininey* voice and, as she expresses it, a frame all nerve, delicately alive to every call of sensibility, and I defy you to produce a pendant.

By the bye, I am delighted to be reckoned like mama. 'A very bad edition though,' as an honest man said of me at Mrs. Somebody's ball.

Young Clarity

HARRIET CAVENDISH TO HER SISTER GEORGIANA

29 November, 1803

. . . I am *almost* sure (I have a good mind to leave out the *almost*) that I could never like Duncannon. I think him uncommonly handsome, good-tempered and affectionate and feeling in his heart and manners to everything that belongs to him, but I *do not* think him clever and I *do* think him trifling, inconstant and inconsequent to the greatest, most dreadful, and even unparalleled degree, and unless a woman is convinced, not as a *manière de parler*, but as a positive fact that she is the handsomest, cleverest and most fascinating woman that is, or ever can be, produced, how can she have any happiness with a man whom caprice attaches to her, and who has no principle to confirm or character to secure him to her? I am convinced of his present attachment to me, but in the state it now is, 5 minutes might transfer it to some other object, and it is, on my part, so little valued, that in 5 minutes my vanity might recover the shock. . . .

*Two Stories from Castle Howard*¹

HARRIET CAVENDISH TO HER MOTHER (THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE)

September, 1804

. . . Charles Bagot once told me that he went to a dinner and found a most formal circle established round the room, from which the lady of the house advanced and said to him, 'The subject is Lord George

¹ In Yorkshire, where the Morpeths lived. Harriet's brother-in-law was 6th Earl of Carlisle.

Gordon,' which method of conversation is a little in the style of ours here, and, without being very impudent, I am almost the only person here who does not blush at the sound of my own voice.

The regularity I am now accustomed to (through the clock in the hall being put on five minutes) is announced to the whole family, as a journey into the Peak would be among *nous autres*.

I like them all though, People and Clocks, for they both do well when one's used to them.

. . . Lord C. has very gloomy fits, *mais au milieu de la tempête on peut entrevoir des beaux jours*, during which he is pleasant and tells some funny stories—amongst others of a man whom nothing could put out of his way, or *dérouter* in the least. To try him one night Lord Somebody and a large party at a house in the country made him dead drunk, rubbed him all over with sirrur, rolled him in a feather bed and then hid themselves in his room to watch his recovery. When he woke he walked slowly up to the glass, and, upon beholding himself, quietly said—'A bird, by God,' and went and sat down again. I tell you this because I nearly expired when I heard it and though it does not do as well *par écrit*, I like to fancy I see you laugh at the same things that I did.

Addio, adored Emma.¹



No Such Easy Matter

WILLIAM PONSONBY (AGED 7) TO HIS BROTHERS

Naples, January or February, 1794

Brothers, I have seen an irruption on Mount Vesuvius. I have not yet been up Mount Vesuvius though. My sister sends her love to you. I have been to Virgil's tomb, if you know any such person, he lived about 1800 years ago. We are at Naples. Virgil wrote poems.

My grandmama writes with glass pens. My papa is drawing now, he is drawing a very pretty picture, I think.

We have wood fires here as we have at Roehampton, only without any coal. I don't like to write this letter to you because it is spoiling my mama's paper. I want to buy some of my own. My mama writes in the carriage, she has got a little table in it. Mrs. North sent my

¹ The Cavendish children's nickname for their mother.

mama a little dog & my grandmama too, whose names are Scappa & Roma. My mama's dog Scappa is lying by the fireside now. We have sowed some sallad & some peas & they are coming up. My mama is making a collection of lava, & I have a collection of curious things as well as my mama. My mama wants me to learn Italian & to write, but that is no such easy matter for me. John Gale is making a screen for my mama which I don't think of much use as we hardly ever have fires.

My papa is drawing of Naples with people dancing the Tantina, & my mama has got two vases. I shall write to my brother Frederick next post.

Dear brothers I love you.

MARJORIE FLEMING¹ TO ISABELLA KEITH
(SHE WAS FIVE YEARS OLD)

1809

My dear Isa,

I now sit down to answer all your kind and beloved letters which you was so good as to write to me. This is the first time I ever wrote a letter in my Life. There are a great many Girls in the Square and they cry just like a pig when we are under the painful necessity of putting it to Death. Miss Potune a Lady of my acquaintance praises me dreadfully. I repeated something out of Dean Swift, and she said I was fit for the stage, and you may think I was primmed up with majistick Pride, but upon my word felt myselfe turn a little birsay—birsay is a word which is a word that William composed which is as you may suppose a little enraged. This horrid fat simpliton says that my Aunt is beautiful which is intirely impossible for that is not her nature.

¹ *Marjorie Fleming* (1803–1811) showed in her few years prodigious talent delighting her friend Sir Walter Scott. The present anthology has avoided items merely quaint, but this childish effort is famous.

*Thoughts on the Dead—'Not Melancholy
or Gentlemanlike'*

LORD BYRON¹ TO JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE

Newstead Abbey, 10 August, 1811

My dear Hobhouse,—From Davies I had already received tidings of the death of Matthews,² and from *M.* a letter dated the day before his death. In that letter he mentions you, and as it was perhaps the last he ever wrote, you will derive a poor consolation from hearing that he spoke of you with that affectionate familiarity, so much more pleasing from those we love, than the highest encomiums of the world.

My dwelling you already know is the house of mourning,³ and I am really so much bewildered with the different shocks I have sustained, that I can hardly reduce myself to reason by the most frivolous occupations.

My poor friend, J. Wingfield,⁴ my mother, and your best friend (and surely not the worst of mine), C. S. M., have disappeared in one little month, since *my return*, and without my seeing *either*, though I have *heard* from *all*.

There is to me something so incomprehensible in death, that I can neither speak nor think on the subject. Indeed, when I looked on the mass of corruption which was the being from whence I sprung, I doubted within myself whether I *was* or whether she *was not*.

I have lost her who gave me being, and some of those who made that being a blessing. I have neither hopes nor fears beyond the grave, yet if there is within us 'a spark of that Celestial fire,' Matthews has already 'mingled with the gods'.

In the room where I now write (flanked by the *skulls* you have seen so often) did you and Matthews and myself pass some joyous unprofit-

¹ Byron (cf. note to p. 109) combines impetuosity and shrewdness to a degree that shatters conventions; and even those who find his poetry flashy admit the incandescent spirit of his letters. As may be seen from the evidence in the Introduction, violence is the defeat of excellence in epistolatory style; but Byron succeeds, as Saintsbury remarks: 'particularly when he is able to apply the *Don Juan* mood of sarcastic if rather superficial life-criticism in which he was a real master.'

² Much loved at Trinity, was drowned in the Cam.

³ Mrs Byron died on 1st August, 1811.

⁴ A Harrow friend, had recently died at Coimbra.

able evenings, and here we will drink to his memory, which though it cannot reach the dead, will soothe the survivors, and to them only death can be an evil.

I can neither receive nor administer consolation ; time will do it for us ; in the interim let me see or hear from you, if possible both.

I am very lonely, and should think myself miserable were it not for a kind of hysterical merriment, which I can neither account for nor conquer ; but strange as it is, I do laugh, and heartily, wondering at myself while I sustain it.

I have tried reading, and boxing, and swimming, and writing, and rising early, and sitting late, and water, and wine, with a number of ineffectual remedies, and here I am, wretched, but not 'melancholy or gentlemanlike'.

My dear '*Cam of the Cornish*'¹ (Matthew's last expression!!) may man or God give you the happiness which I wish rather than expect you may attain ; believe me, none living are more sincerely yours than

BYRON

'Quite Alone'

LORD BYRON TO THE HON AUGUSTA LEIGH

Newstead Abbey, 9 September, 1811

. . . I am quite alone and never see strangers without being sick, but I am nevertheless on good terms with my neighbours, for I neither ride or shoot or move over my Garden walls, but I fence and box and swim and run a good deal to keep me in exercise and get me to sleep. Poor Murray is ill again, and one of my Greek servants is ill too, and my valet has got a pestilent cough, so that we are in a peck of troubles ; my family Surgeon sent an Emetic this morning for *one* of them, I did not know very well *which*, but I swore *Somebody* should take it, so after a deal of discussion the Greek swallowed it with tears in his eyes, and by the blessing of it, and the *Virgin* whom he invoked to assist *it* and *him*, I suppose he'll be well tomorrow, if not, *another* shall have the *next*. So your Spouse likes children, *that* is lucky as he will have to bring them up ; for my part (since I lost my Newfoundland dog,) I

¹ Hobhouse was not a Cornishman, but Matthews probably was making jocular reference to the father's membership for Grampound.

like nobody except his successor a Dutch mastiff and three land Tortoises brought me from Greece. . . .

'I Don't Make Love till Almost Obligated'

LORD BYRON TO LADY MELBOURNE

Cheltenham, 10 September, 1812

I presume you have heard and will not be sorry to hear again that *they* are safely deposited in Ireland,¹ and that the sea rolls between you and *one* of your torments ; the other you see is still at your elbow. Now (if you are as sincere as I sometimes almost dream) you will not regret to hear, that I wish this to end, and it certainly shall not be renewed on my part. It is not that I love another, but loving at all is quite out of my way ; I am tired of being a fool, and when I look back on the waste of time, and the destruction of all my plans last winter by this last romance, I am—what I ought to have been long ago. It is true from early habit, one must make love mechanically, as one swims. I was once very fond of both, but now as I never swim, unless I tumble into the water, I don't make love till almost obliged, though I fear *that* is not the shortest way out of the troubled waves with which in such accidents we must struggle.

But I will say no more on this topic, as I am not sure of my ground, and you can easily outwit me, as you always hitherto have done. . . .

Cynical Complications, and Sixteen Slaps

LORD BYRON TO THOMAS MOORE

Venice, 28 January, 1817

. . . Venice is in the *estro* ² of her carnival, and I have been up these last two nights at the *ridotto* ³ and the opera, and all that kind of thing. Now for an adventure. A few days ago a gondolier brought me a *billet* without a subscription, intimating a wish on the part of the

¹ By 'they' he means Lady Bessborough and her daughter Lady Caroline Lamb, whose notorious passion for Byron had been scandalous, though his friendship with Lady Melbourne, her husband's mother, is undisturbed thereby.

² Fine fury.

³ Masked ball.

writer to meet me either in gondola or at the island of San Lazaro, or at a third *rendezvous*, indicated in the note. 'I know the country's disposition well'—in Venice 'they do let Heaven see those tricks they dare not show,' etc., etc. ; so, for all response, I said that neither of the three places suited me ; but that I would either be at home at ten at night *alone*, or be at the *ridotto* at midnight, where the writer might meet me masked. At ten o'clock I was at home and alone (Marianna was gone with her husband to a *conversazione*), when the door of my apartment opened, and in walked a well-looking and (for an Italian) *bionda* ¹ girl of about nineteen, who informed me that she was married to the brother of my *amorosa*, and wished to have some conversation with me. I made a decent reply, and we had some talk in Italian and Romaic (her mother being a Greek of Corfu), when lo ! in a very few minutes, in marches, to my very great astonishment, Marianna Segati, *in propria personâ*, and after making a most polite courtesy to her sister-in-law and to me, without a single word seizes her said sister-in-law by the hair, and bestows upon her some sixteen slaps, which would have made your ear ache only to hear their echo. I need not describe the screaming which ensued. The luckless visitor took flight. I seized Marianna, who, after several vain efforts to get away in pursuit of the enemy, fairly went into fits in my arms ; and, in spite of reasoning, *eau de Cologne*, vinegar, half a pint of water, and God knows what other waters beside, continued so till past midnight.

After damning my servants for letting people in without apprizing me, I found that Marianna in the morning had seen her sister-in-law's gondolier on the stairs, and, suspecting that his apparition boded her no good, had either returned of her own accord, or been followed by her maids or some other spy of her people to the *conversazione*, from whence she returned to perpetrate this piece of pugilism. I had seen fits before, and also some small scenery of the same genus in and out of our island : but this was not all. After about an hour, in comes—who ? why, Signor Segati, her lord and husband, and finds me with his wife fainting upon a sofa, and all the apparatus of confusion, dishevelled hair, hats, handkerchiefs, salts, smelling-bottles—and the lady as pale as ashes, without sense or motion. His first question was, 'What is all this ?' The lady could not reply—so I did. I told him the explanation was the easiest thing in the world ; but in the mean time it would

¹ Blonde.

be as well to recover his wife—at least, her senses. This came about in due time of suspiration and respiration.

You need not be alarmed—jealousy is not the order of the day in Venice, and daggers are out of fashion ; while duels, on love matters, are unknown—at least, with the husbands.

Practical Poet

LORD BYRON, TO THOMAS MOORE

Ravenna, 9 December, 1820

I open my letter to tell you a fact, which will show the state of this country better than I can. The commandant of the troops is now lying dead in my house.¹ He was shot at a little past eight o'clock, about two hundred paces from my door. I was putting on my great-coat to visit Madame la Contessa G. when I heard the shot. On coming into the hall, I found all my servants on the balcony, exclaiming that a man was murdered. I immediately ran down, calling on Tita (the bravest of them) to follow me. The rest wanted to hinder us from going, as it is the custom for every body here, it seems, to run away from 'the stricken deer'.

However, down we ran, and found him lying on his back, almost, if not quite, dead, with five wounds ; one in the heart, two in the stomach, one in the finger, and the other in the arm. Some soldiers cocked their guns, and wanted to hinder me from passing. However we passed, and I found Diego, the adjutant, crying over him like a child—a surgeon who said nothing of his profession—a priest, sobbing a frightened prayer—and the commandant, all this time, on his back,

¹ Saintsbury's reference to the *Don Juan* tone in the letters (cf. Note, p. 116) can be supported here by direct instance, Canto V, xxxiii-iv :

*The other evening ('twas on Friday last)—
This is a fact, and no poetic fable—
Just as my great coat was about me cast,
My hat and gloves still lying on the table,
I heard a shot . . .*

*But why should I add
More circumstances? vain was every care ;
The man was gone : in some Italian quarrel
Kill'd by five bullets from an old gun-barrel.*

on the hard, cold pavement, without light or assistance, or anything around him but confusion and dismay.

As nobody could, or would, do anything but howl and pray, and as nobody would stir a finger to move him, for fear of consequences, I lost my patience—made my servant and a couple of the mob to take up the body—sent off two soldiers to the guard—despatched Diego to the Cardinal with the news, and had the commandant carried up stairs into my own quarter. But it was too late, he was gone—not at all disfigured—bled inwardly—not above an ounce or two came out.

I had him partly stripped—made the surgeon examine him, and examined him myself. He had been shot by cut balls or slugs. I felt one of the slugs, which had gone through him, all but the skin. Everybody conjectures why he was killed, but no one knows how. The gun was found close by him—an old gun, half filed down.

He only said, 'O Dio!' and 'Gesù!' two or three times, and appeared to have suffered little. Poor fellow! he was a brave officer, but had made himself much disliked by the people. I knew him personally, and had met him often at *conversazioni* and elsewhere. My house is full of soldiers, dragoons, doctors, priests, and all kinds of persons,—though I have now cleared it, and clapt sentinels at the doors. To-morrow the body is to be moved. The town is in the greatest confusion, as you may suppose.

You are to know that, if I had not had the body moved, they would have left him there till morning in the street, for fear of consequences. I would not choose to let even a dog die in such a manner, without succour :—and, as for consequences, I care for none in a duty.

Yours

P.S. The lieutenant on duty by the body is smoking his pipe with great composure.—A queer people this.

Gondola Moths

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY TO THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

Este, 8 October, 1818

... Venice is a wonderfully fine city. The approach to it over the *laguna*, with its domes and turrets glittering in a long line over the blue waves, is one of the finest architectural delusions in the world. It seems to have—and literally it has—its foundations in the sea. The

silent streets are paved with water, and you hear nothing but the dashing of the oars, and the occasional cries of the *gondolieri*. I heard nothing of Tasso.¹ The gondolas themselves are things of a most romantic and picturesque appearance ; I can only compare them to moths of which a coffin might have been the *chrysalis*. They are hung with black, and painted black, and carpeted with grey ; they curl at the prow and stern, and at the former there is a nondescript beak of shining steel, which glitters at the end of its long black mass. . . .

Assassination and Laughter

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY TO THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

Naples, 22 December, 1818

. . . On entering Naples, the first circumstance that engaged my attention was an assassination. A youth ran out of a shop, pursued by a woman with a bludgeon, and a man armed with a knife. The man overtook him, and with one blow in the neck laid him dead in the road. On my expressing the emotions of horror and indignation which I felt, a Calabrian priest, who travelled with me, laughed heartily, and attempted to quiz me, as what the English call a flat. I never felt such an inclination to beat any one. Heaven knows I have little power, but he saw that I looked extremely displeased, and was silent. This same man, a fellow of gigantic strength and stature, had expressed the most frantic terror of robbers on the road ; he cried at the sight of my pistol, and it had been with great difficulty that the joint exertions of myself and *vetturino* had quieted his hysterics. . . .

¹ Shelley is referring to Byron, whose letter (1.7.1817) to Murray quotes :

*In Venice Tasso's echo is no more,
And silent rows the songless gondolier.*

and adds that their ballad was Tasso's *Gerusalemme*.

Against Mawkish Popularity

JOHN KEATS¹ TO J. H. REYNOLDS

Teignmouth, 9 April, 1818

My dear Reynolds,—

Since you all agree that the thing is bad, it must be so—though I am not aware there is anything like Hunt in it (and if there is, it is my natural way, and I have something in common with Hunt). Look it over again, and examine into the motives, the seeds from which any one sentence sprang.

I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the public, or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men. When I am writing for myself, for the mere sake of the moment's enjoyment, perhaps nature has its course with me ; but a Preface is written to the public—a thing I cannot help looking upon as an enemy, and which I cannot address without feelings of hostility. If I write a Preface in a supple or subdued style, it will not be in character with me as a public speaker.

I would be subdued before my friends, and thank them for subduing me ; but among multitudes of men I have no feel of stooping ; I hate the idea of humility to them.

I never wrote one single line of poetry with the least shadow of public thought.

Forgive me for vexing you, and making a Trojan horse of such a trifle, both with respect to the matter in question, and myself ; but it eases me to tell you : I could not live without the love of my friends ; I would jump down Ætna for any great public good, but I hate a mawkish popularity.

' The Flummery of a Birthplace '

JOHN KEATS TO JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS

Maybole, 11 July, 1818

... We went to the Cottage and took some whisky. I wrote a sonnet for the mere sake of writing some lines under the roof : they

¹ Selection from the letters of Keats is too difficult. They are splendidly warm-hearted, first-class in description and bravely critical ; but when a poet dies on the threshold of his own marvellous maturity his unrevised utterances to his friends require a reverent close study beyond the reach of an anthology.

are so bad I cannot transcribe them. The man at the cottage was a great bore with his anecdotes. I hate the rascal. His life consists in fuz, fuzzy, fuzziest. He drinks glasses five for the quarter, and twelve for the hour : he is a mahogany-faced old jackass who knew Burns : he ought to have been kicked for having spoken to him. He calls himself ' a curious old bitch ', but he is a flat old dog. I should like to employ Caliph Vathek to kick him. ¹ Oh, the flummery of a birth-place! Cant! cant! cant! It is enough to give a spirit the guts-ache. Many a true word, they say, is spoken in jest—this may be because his gab hindered my sublimity : the flat dog made me write a flat sonnet. My dear Reynolds, I cannot write about scenery and visitings. Fancy is indeed less than a present palpable reality, but it is greater than remembrance. You would lift your eyes from Homer only to see close before you the real Isle of Tenedos. You would rather read Homer afterwards than remember yourself. One song of Burns's is of more worth to you than all I could think for a whole year in his native country. His misery is a dead weight upon the nimbleness of one's quill ; I tried to forget it—to drink toddy without any care—to write a merry sonnet—it won't do—he talked with bitches, he drank with blackguards ; he was miserable. . . .

' Never afraid of Failure '

JOHN KEATS TO HIS PUBLISHER

9 October, 1818

My dear Hessey, You are very good in sending me the letter from *The Chronicle*, and I am very bad in not acknowledging such a kindness sooner ; pray forgive me. . . . I cannot but feel indebted to those gentlemen who have taken my part. As for the rest, I begin to get a little acquainted with my own strength and weakness. Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or *The Quarterly* could possibly inflict : and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reperception and ratification of what is fine. J. S. is perfectly right in regard to the ' slip-shod *Endymion* '. That it is so is no fault

¹ Beckford's Caliph kicked the bodies of his guards in a rage ' till evening '.

of mine. No! though it may sound a little paradoxical. It is as good as I had power to make it by myself. Had I been nervous about its being a perfect piece and with that view asked advice, and trembled over every page, it would not have been written ; for it is not in my nature to fumble. I will write independently. I have written independently *without judgment*. I may write independently, and with *judgment*, hereafter. The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man. It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself. That which is creative must create itself. In *Endymion* I leaped headlong into the sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the soundings, the quicksands, and the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice. I was never afraid of failure ; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest. But I am nigh getting into a rant ; so, with remembrances to Taylor and Woodhouse, etc., I am,

Yours very sincerely,

JOHN KEATS

‘ *Greatness in a Shade* ’

JOHN KEATS TO B. R. HAYDON

Wentworth Place, 22 December, 1818

My dear Haydon,

. . . Believe me, I never *rhodomontade* anywhere but in your company. My general life in society is silence. I feel in myself all the vices of a poet—irritability, love of effect and admiration ; and influenced by such devils I may at times say more ridiculous things than I am aware of, but I will put a stop to that in a manner I have long resolved upon. I will buy a gold ring and put it on my finger ; and from that time a man of superior head shall never have occasion to pity me, or one of inferior numskull to chuckle at me. I am certainly more for greatness in a shade than in the open day. I am speaking as a mortal. I should say, I value more the privilege of seeing great things in loneliness, than the fame of a prophet. Yet here I am sinning, so I will turn to a thing I have thought on more, I mean your means till your picture be finished. Not only now, but for this year and a half have I thought of it. Believe me, Haydon, I have that sort of fire in my heart that would sacrifice everything I have to your service. I speak without any reserve. I know you would do so for me. I open

my heart to you in a few words. I will do this sooner than you shall be distressed, but let me be the last stay. Ask the rich lovers of Art first. I will tell you why. I have a little money which may enable me to study, and to travel three or four years. I never expect to get anything by my books, and, moreover, I wish to avoid publishing. I admire human nature, but I do not like *men*. I should like to compose things honourable to man, but not fingerable over by *men*; so I am anxious to exist without troubling the printer's devil, or drawing upon men's or women's admiration, in which great solitude I hope God will give me strength to rejoice. Try the long purses, but do not sell your drawing, or I shall consider it a breach of friendship. Do write and let me know all your present whys and wherefores.

Yours most faithfully,

JOHN KEATS

A Sick Man Sees the World Go By

JOHN KEATS TO HIS SISTER, FANNY

Wentworth Place, Tuesday morn.
8 February, 1820

I had a slight return of fever last night, which terminated favourably, and I am now tolerably well, though weak from small quantity of food to which I am obliged to confine myself; I am sure a mouse would starve upon it. Mrs. Wylie came yesterday.

I have a very pleasant room for a sick person. A sofa bed is made up for me in the front parlour which looks on to the grass plot as you remember Mrs. Dilke's does. How much more comfortable than a dull room upstairs, where one gets tired of the pattern of the bed curtains. Besides I see all that passes—for instance now, this morning, if I had been in my own room I should not have seen the coals brought in. On Sunday between the hours of twelve and one I descried a pot boy. I conjectured it might be the one o'clock beer.

Old women with hobbins and red cloaks and unassuming bonnets, I see creeping about the Heath. Gipsies after hare skins and silver spoons. Then goes by a fellow with a wooden clock under his arm that strikes a hundred and more. Then comes the old French emigrant (who has been very well to do in France) with his hands joined behind on his hips, and his face full of political schemes.

Then passes Mr. David Lewis, a very good-natured, good-looking old gentleman who has been very kind to Tom and George and me. As for those fellows the brickmakers, they are always passing to and fro. I mustn't forget the two old maiden ladies in Well Walk, who have a lap dog between them that they are very anxious about. It is a corpulent little beast whom it is necessary to coax along with an ivory-tipped cane. Carlo, our neighbour Mrs. Brawne's dog, and it meet sometimes. Lappy thinks Carlo a devil of a fellow, and so do his mistresses. Well they may—he would sweep 'em all down at a run ; all for the joke of it. I shall desire him to peruse the fable of the Boys and the Frogs ; though he prefers the tongues and the bones.

You shall hear from me again the day after to-morrow.

Load Every Rift with Ore—the Poet's Discipline

JOHN KEATS TO PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Hampstead, August, 1820

My dear Shelley,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost over-occupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering, hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed that, come what extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of the *Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits nowadays is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon ; he must have 'self-concentration'—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon

you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk. I am in expectation of *Prometheus* every day. Could I have my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be but now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first blights, on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in the volume I send you have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for hope of gain ; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now. I must express once more my deep sense of your kindness, adding my sincere thanks and respects for Mrs. Shelley. In the hope of soon seeing you—

To Play First Fiddle

WILLIAM HAZLITT TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Monthly*

Wem, Shropshire, July, 1808

Sir,—

I am not so much surprised as probably some of your readers at the mortifying account which has been published in your work of the brutality of Sterne to his mother. For, above forty years ago, as I was travelling in a coach from Bath to London, my companion, a Dr. Marriot, who was his near neighbour, gave me such a character of the man as filled me with unfavourable impressions of him ever since. Being then a young man, and, like most other young men, being too forward to show my opinion of men and books, I began to express my high admiration of the writings of Sterne, and to pass unqualified eulogiums upon him, as a man possessed of the finest feelings and philanthropy.

As soon as I had ended my frothy declaration, the Doctor very placidly told me that I did not know the man as well as he did ; that he was his very near neighbour ; and that of all the men he ever knew he was the most devoid of the feelings of humanity, or of everything that we call sympathy.

As one proof of this, the Doctor told me that his daughter had some acquaintance with Miss Sterne, and therefore that she frequently passed an afternoon at his house ; that Miss Sterne was subject to violent

epileptic fits, that she had been lately seized with one of these, which was accompanied with such alarming symptoms, as made him and his daughter apprehend that she was dying ; that they therefore sent to Mr. Sterne to apprise him of the circumstance, and to come to them immediately.

After waiting for some time in anxious expectation, the gentleman made his appearance, and seeing his daughter agonized upon the floor, and seemingly ready to expire, he coolly observed that she would be well again presently and that he could not stop a moment, being engaged to play the first fiddle at York that night. Thus he took his leave, and hastily hurried out of the house.

We cannot therefore conclude with any certainty what a man feels from the pathos of his writings, unless we have an intimate acquaintance with the man himself ; unless we can prove from his actions that his high-wrought descriptions are the index of his mind.

‘ There are Other People in the World ’

WILLIAM HAZLITT TO HIS SON AT SCHOOL

1822

My Dear Little Fellow,

You are now going to settle at school, and may consider this as your first entrance into the world. As my health is so indifferent, and I may not be with you long, I wish to leave you some advice (the best I can) for your conduct in life, both that it may be of use to you, and as something to remember me by. I may at least be able to caution you against my own errors, if nothing else.

As we went along to your new place of destination, you often repeated that you durst say that they were a set of stupid, disagreeable people, meaning the people at the school. You were to blame in this. It is a good old rule to hope for the best. Always, my dear, believe things to be right till you find them the contrary ; and even then, instead of irritating yourself against them, endeavour to put up with them as well as you can, if you cannot alter them. You said you were sure you should not like the school where you were going. This was wrong. What you meant was that you did not like to leave home. But you could not tell whether you should like the school or not, till you had given it a trial. Otherwise, your saying that you should not like it was determining that you would not like it. Never anticipate

evils ; or because you cannot have things exactly as you wish, make them out worse than they are, through mere spite and wilfulness.

You seemed at first to take no notice of your school-fellows, or rather to set yourself against them, because they were strangers to you. They knew as little of you as you did of them ; so that this would have been a reason for their keeping aloof from you as well, which you would have felt as a hardship. Learn never to conceive a prejudice against others because you know nothing of them. It is bad reasoning, and makes enemies of half the world. Do not think ill of them till they behave ill to you ; and then strive to avoid the faults which you see in them. This will disarm their hostility sooner than pique or resentment or complaint.

I thought you were disposed to criticise the dress of some of the boys as not so good as your own. Never despise any one for anything that he cannot help—least of all, for his poverty. I would wish you to keep up appearances yourself as a defence against the idle sneers of the world, but I would not have you value yourself upon them. I hope you will neither be the dupe nor victim of vulgar prejudices. Instead of saying above, ' Never despise any one for anything that he cannot help,' I might have said, ' Never despise any one at all ' ; for contempt implies a triumph over and pleasure in the ill of another. It means that you are glad and congratulate yourself on their failings or misfortunes.

You complain since, that the boys laugh at you and do not care about you, and that you are not treated as you were at home. My dear, that is one chief reason for you being sent to school, to inure you betimes to the unavoidable rubs and uncertain reception you may meet with in life. You cannot always be with me, and perhaps it is as well that you cannot. But you must not expect others to show the same concern about you as I should. You have hitherto been a spoiled child, and have been used to have your own way a good deal both in the house and among your play-fellows, with whom you were too fond of being a leader ; but you have good-nature and good sense, and will get the better of this in time. You have now got among other boys who are your equals, or bigger and stronger than yourself, and who have something else to attend to besides humouring your whims and fancies, and you feel this as a repulse or piece of injustice. But the first lesson to learn is that there are other people in the world besides yourself.

There are a number of boys in the school where you are, whose amusements and pursuits (whatever they may be) are and ought to be

of as much consequence to them as yours can be to you, and to which therefore you must give way in your turn. The more airs of childish self-importance you give yourself, you will only expose yourself to be the more thwarted and laughed at. True equality is the only true morality or true wisdom. Remember always that you are but one among others, and you can hardly mistake your place in society. In your father's house you might do as you pleased : in the world you will find competitors at every turn. You are not born a king's son, to destroy or dictate to millions ; you can only expect to share their fate, or settle your differences amicably with them. You already find it so at school, and I wish you to be reconciled to your situation as soon and with as little pain as you can.

' Poor Hazlitt '

BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON¹ TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

8 September, 1822

Hazlitt at present gives me great pain by the folly with which he is conducting himself. He has fallen in love, to a pitch of insanity, with a lodging-house hussy, who will be his death. He has been to Scotland and divorced his wife, although he has a fine little boy by her ; and after doing this to marry this girl, he comes back and finds she has been making a fool of him in order to get presents, and in reality has been admitting a lover more favoured. Hazlitt's torture is beyond expression ; you may imagine it. The girl really excited in him a pure, devoted, and intense love. His imagination clothed her with that virtue which her affected modesty induced him to believe in, and he is really downright in love with an ideal perfection, which has no existence but in his own head ! He talks of nothing else day and night. He has written down all the conversations without colour, literal as they happened ; he has preserved all the love-letters, many of which are equal to anything of the sort, and really affecting ; and I believe, in order to ease his soul of this burden, means, with certain arrange-

¹ Haydon committed suicide after a life-time of heroic if egotistical struggle as a painter. His journals (and the excellent introduction by Mr Aldous Huxley) show the tragedy of his artistic misdirection. He touches words with genius and canvas with none.

ments, to publish it as a tale of character. He will sink into idiocy if he does not get rid of it.

Poor Hazlitt! He who makes so free with the follies of his friends, is of all mortals the most open to ridicule. To hear him repeat in a solemn tone and with agitated mouth the things of love he said to her (to convince you that he made love in the true gallant way), to feel the beauty of the sentiment, and then look up and see his old, hard, weather-beaten, saturnine, metaphysical face—the very antidote of the sentiment—twitching all sorts of ways, is really enough to provoke a saint to laughter. He has a notion that women have never liked him. Since this affair he has dressed in the fashion, and keeps insinuating his improved appearance. *He springs up to show you his pantaloons!* What a being it is! His conversation is now a mixture of disappointed revenge, passionate remembrances, fiendish hopes, and melting lamentations. I feel convinced his metaphysical habits of thinking have rendered him insensible to moral duty, &c.

Upon What Meat is this our Genius Fed

BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON TO MISS MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

18 August, 1826

The other night I paid my butcher ; one of the miracles of these times, you will say. Let me tell you I have all my life been seeking for a butcher whose respect for genius predominated over his love of gain. I could not make out, before I dealt with this man, his excessive desire that I should be his customer ; his sly hints as I passed his shop that he had 'a bit of South Down, very fine ; a sweetbread, perfection ; and a calf's foot that was all jelly without bone!' The other day he called and I had him sent up into the painting-room. I found him in great admiration of *Alexander*. 'Quite alive, sir!' 'I am glad you think so,' said I. 'Yes, sir ; but as I have said often to my sister, you could not have painted that picture, sir, if you had not eat my meat, sir!' 'Very true, Mr. Sowerby.' 'Ah! sir I have a fancy for *genus*, sir!' 'Have you, Mr. Sowerby?' 'Yes, sir ; Mrs. Siddons, sir, has eat my meat, sir ; never was *such a woman for chops*, sir!' and he drew up his beefy, shiny face, clean-shaved, with a clean blue cravat under his chin, a clean jacket, a clean apron, and a pair of hands that would pin an ox to the earth if he was obstreperous—'Ah! sir, she was

a wonderful crayture!’ ‘She was, Mr. Sowerby.’ ‘Ah! sir, when she used to act that there character, you see (but Lord, such a head! as I say to my sister)—that there woman, sir, that murders a king between ’em!’ ‘Oh, Lady Macbeth.’ ‘Ah! sir, that’s it—Lady Macbeth—I used to get up with the butler behind her carridge when she acted, and, as I used to see her looking quite wild, and all the people quite frightened. Ah, ha! my lady, says I, if it wasn’t for my meat, though, you wouldn’t be able to do *that*!’ ‘Mr. Sowerby, you seem to be a man of feeling; will you take a glass of wine?’ After a bow or two, down he sat, and by degrees his heart opened. ‘You see, sir, I have fed Mrs. Siddons, sir; John Kemble, sir; Charles Kemble, sir; Stephen Kemble, sir; and Madam Catalani, sir; Morland the painter, and, I beg your pardon, sir, and *you*, sir.’ ‘Mr. Sowerby, you do me honour.’ ‘Madam Catalani, sir, was a wonderful woman for sweet-breads; but the Kemble family, sir, the gentlemen, sir, rump-steaks and kidneys in general was their taste; but Mrs. Siddons, sir, she liked chops, sir, as much as you do, sir,’ etc., etc. I soon perceived that the man’s ambition was to feed genius. I shall recommend you to him; but is he not a capital fellow? But a little acting with his remarks would make you roar with laughter. Think of Lady Macbeth eating chops! Is this not a peep behind the curtain? I remember Wilkie saying that at a public dinner he was looking out for some celebrated man, when at last he caught a glimpse for the first time of a man whose books he had read with care for years, picking the leg of a roast goose perfectly abstracted!

‘Tender Feelings’

B. R. HAYDON TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

26 August, 1826

Another bit of common life.

Did I ever tell you the story of two black-haired St. Giles’s ladies strolling before me in the park? On coming to a pretty green spot, one girl had got before the other, when, seizing her drabbed and dirty gown with a pair of hands as red as the ‘Red Lion’ of a country inn, she hallooed out to the other girl behind, in a voice burly with vice and drink, ‘I say, Sal —, come up here, and I’ll show yer the place where Bob and I parted.’ Wasn’t it a beautiful touch? This was her way of associating the tender feelings. Her heart had been cut when

Bob threw his arms around her neck and imprinted a sobbing kiss on her coral lips. You should have seen Hazlitt when I told him this!

The Super-Byron

B. R. HAYDON TO MISS MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

8 January, 1827

Have you read Leigh Hunt's last bit on Byron in *Campbell's Magazine*? If not, read it without further fatal procrastination. 'The noble lord,' says Leigh Hunt, 'complains in *Don Juan* that he could never make a lady tell her age!' 'But,' says the amiable and chivalrous Leigh, 'we have been more fortunate with our fair informants than the noble lord.' Oh! Heavens! *His* fair informants! Who be they? Mrs Gleddon, the tobacconist's wife, or the lady of 'Hampstead ponds,' who, in trying to be pathetic, and hoping she might *not* be drowned, threw herself off a wooden footpath into a Hampstead puddle where it was six inches deep, and was pulled out black with mud and dripping with water, sufficiently disfigured to excite sympathy, yet quite secure (as she wished) and not requiring the aid of the Humane Society for her recovery. Poor Leigh! Why does he write such twaddle? He is now writing his life, which will be a monkish mixture of petticoat twaddling and Grandison cant. . . .

Gallant Subscription

B. R. HAYDON TO THE PUBLISHER MOXON

The King's Bench Prison,
12 October, 1836

My Dear Sir,

Will you put me down as a subscriber to your number of Wordsworth? This is a strange place to order him from, but I relish him more here than in the mountains, from sheer contrast of locality. I will send at the first opportunity.

There is a trifle would oblige me. He dedicates his sonnets to R. B. Haydon. My name is B. R. Haydon, and, for God's sake, leave out, 'Esq.'

Do oblige me if you have it in your power.

Yours truly,

'In the Country'

B. R. HAYDON TO HIS WIFE

29 April, 1839

The tiresome habits of people in the country would drive me stark mad in six months. I'll just give you an instance of Lancashire. Here at Warrington, on arriving this evening, I asked a man, 'Is this the way to the "Red Lion"?' He repeats my words, 'Is this the way to the "Red Lion"?' dropping his head on his breast, and as if lost in thought at the profundity of the question. 'Is this the way to the "Red Lion"?' he said again, looking up and smiling in my face at his own sagacity that an idea had reached him at last. 'Wale, I just think it may be; but, stop, I'll inquire.' This was too much for me, and I darted into a shop. 'Is this the way to the "Red Lion"?' I said fiercely to the man behind the counter. 'Wale,' he replied, 'the "Red Lion"?' ar't sure it t'aint the "Nag's Head"?' 'God forbid!' I cried in my agony; 'I don't know.' 'Not know,' said he; 'may be, then, it is the "Red Lion" you want, and *that* is the way; though, stop,' he said, 'up by the market's the nearest; that is, I think it be; but Mr. Thomas, the printer, knows *wale*, and his house is the first after you've passed the corner. But, *stop a minute*, and I'll just go myself and ask.' The intellect of Warrington has evidently not got sufficient employment.

Poets at Great Ease

BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

London, 16 October, 1842

In the words of our dear departed friend, Charles Lamb, 'You good-for-nothing old Lake-poet' what has become of you? Do you remember his saying that at my table in 1819, with *Jerusalem* towering behind us in the painting room, and Keats and your friend Monkhouse of the party? Do you remember Lamb voting me absent, and then making a speech descanting on my excellent port, and proposing a vote of thanks? Do you remember his then voting me present?—I had never left my chair—and informing me of what had been done during my retirement, and hoping I was duly sensible of the honour?

Do you remember the Commissioner (of Stamps and Taxes) who asked you if you did not think Milton a great genius, and Lamb getting

up and asking leave with a candle to examine his phrenological development? Do you remember poor dear Lamb, whenever the Commissioner was equally profound, saying : ' My son John went to bed with his breeches on,' to the dismay of the learned man? Do you remember you and I and Monkhouse getting Lamb out of the room by force, and putting on his great coat, he reiterating his earnest desire to examine the Commissioner's skull?

And don't you remember Keats proposing ' Confusion to the memory of Newton,' and upon your insisting on an explanation before you drank it, his saying : ' Because he destroyed the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to a prism.'

Ah! my dear, old friend, you and I shall never see such days again! The peaches are not so big now as they were in our days. Many were the immortal dinners which took place in that painting room, where the food was simple, the wine good, and the poetry first rate. . . .

Two Glimpses of a Very Eccentric Friend

CHARLES LAMB¹ TO THOMAS MANNING²

(i)

27 December, 1800

At length George Dyer's³ phrenitis has come to a crisis ; he is raging and furiously mad. I waited upon the heathen, Thursday was a

¹ The rich imp or angel in Lamb's affectionate pen captivates nearly all mankind, and those few who are deaf to him would find it hard to explain away the concord of admiration that arises in particular over his letters. Fitzgerald thought the letters better than the *Essays* ; and he reports admiration approaching idolatry in his great friend, who was a judge of such things : ' Saint Charles, as Thackeray once called him while looking at one of his half-mad letters.' A later letter from Fitzgerald (4.4.1878) says that Thackeray put one of Lamb's letters to his forehead as he said ' St. Charles '. The effect upon a modern critic is identical. It is ' difficult to believe,' says Lytton Strachey, ' that the letters of Lamb ever went through the same post as those of Byron and Keats. Indeed, it is difficult to believe that they ever went through the post at all. They are letters which a voyaging angel might write to the City of Heaven ; they bear no marks of time or space or such sublunary accidents.' Some of the *Essays* had seed and growth in the letters, (e.g., *Distant Correspondents*, cf. p. 142 : *Roast Pig*, cf. p. 145) and it is clear that Lamb had supremely the gifts needed in a letter-writer, as, for instance, delight in urban humanity, with the imagination [For footnotes 2 and 3, see p. 137.]

se'nnight ; the first symptom which struck my eye and gave me incontrovertible proof of the fatal truth was a pair of nankeen pantaloons four times too big for him, which the said Heathen did pertinaciously affirm to be new.

They were absolutely ingrained with the accumulated dirt of ages ; but he affirmed them to be clean. He was going to visit a lady that was nice about those things, and that's the reason he wore nankeen that day. And then he danced, and capered, and fidgeted, and pulled up his pantaloons, and hugged his intolerable flannel vestment closer about his poetic loins ; anon he gave it loose to the zephyrs which plentifully insinuate their tiny bodies through every crevice, door, window or wainscot, expressly formed for the exclusion of such impertinents. Then he caught at a proof sheet, and caught up a laundress's bill instead—made a dart at Bloomfield's Poems,¹ and threw them in agony aside. I could not bring him to one direct reply ; he could not maintain his jumping mind in a right line for the tithe of a moment by Clifford's Inn clock. He must go to the printer's immediately—the most unlucky accident—he had struck off five hundred impressions of his Poems, which were ready for delivery to subscribers, and the Preface must all be expunged. There were eighty pages of Preface, and not till that morning had he discovered that in the very first page of said Preface he had set out with a principle of Criticism fundamentally wrong, which vitiated all his following reasoning. The Preface must be expunged, although it cost him £30—the lowest calculation, taking in paper and printing ! In vain have his real friends remonstrated against this Midsummer madness. George is as obstinate as a Primitive Christian—and wards and parries off all our thrusts with one unanswerable fence ; —‘ Sir, it's of great consequence that the world is not mised ! ’ . . .

tion to see the pathetic background of human loves and foibles. Nobody fulfils better the fine definition of humour that Saintsbury quotes (from George Eliot) ‘ thinking in jest while feeling in earnest ’ ; and the flexible volubility of his style is unmatched as the vehicle of intimate genius.

² *Thomas Manning*, a Cambridge tutor of mathematics was much loved by Lamb for joyful company. He went as a missionary to China (cf. p. 141).

³ *George Dyer* was an eccentric poor scholar, turned from usher to editor. He was at Christ's Hospital long before Lamb and became later a close but highly gullible friend. See the Essay *Amicus Redivivus* for Lamb's delighted account of George's walking into the river.

¹ Robert Bloomfield had published in this year his *Farmer's Boy*.

shops of the Strand and Fleet Street ; the innumerable trades, tradesmen, and customers, coaches, waggons, playhouses ; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden ; the very women of the Town ; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles ; life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night ; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street ; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print-shops, the old book-stalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes—London itself a pantomime and a masquerade—all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me, without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impels me often into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fullness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you ; so are your rural emotions to me. But consider, what must I have been doing all my life, not to have lent great portions of my heart with usury to such scenes?

My attachments are all local, purely local. I have no passion (or have had none since I was in love, and then it was the spurious engendering of poetry and books) for groves and valleys. The rooms where I was born, the furniture which has been before my eyes all my life, a book-case which has followed me about like a faithful dog, (only exceeding him in knowledge), wherever I have moved, old chairs, old tables, streets, squares, where I have sunned myself, my old school,—these are my mistresses. Have I not enough, without your mountains? I do not envy you. I should pity you, did I not know that the mind will make friends of anything. Your sun, and moon, and skies, and hills, and lakes, affect me no more, or scarcely come to me in more venerable characters, than as a gilded room with tapestry and tapers, where I might live with handsome visible objects. I consider the clouds above me but as a roof beautifully painted, but unable to satisfy the mind : and at last, like the pictures of the apartment of a connoisseur, unable to afford him any longer a pleasure. So fading upon me, from disuse, have been the beauties of Nature, as they have been confinedly called ; so ever fresh, and green, and warm are all the inventions of men, and assemblies of men in this great city.

Against Tartary

CHARLES LAMB TO THOMAS MANNING¹

19 February, 1803

My dear Manning,

The general scope of your letter afforded no indications of insanity, but some particular points raised a scruple. For God's sake don't think any more of 'Independent Tartary'. What are you to do among such Ethiopians? Is there no *lineal descendant* of Prester John?² Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed?³ Depend upon it they'll never make you their king, as long as any branch of that great stock is remaining. I tremble for your Christianity. . . . Read Sir John Mandeville's travels to cure you, or come over to England. There is a Tartar-man now exhibiting at Exeter Change. Come and talk with him, and hear what he says first. Indeed, he is no very favourable specimen of his countrymen! But perhaps the best thing you can do, is to *try* to get the idea out of your head. For this purpose repeat to yourself every night, after you have said your prayers, the words Independent Tartary, Independent Tartary, two or three times, and associate with them the *idea* of *oblivion* ('tis Hartley's method⁴ with obstinate memories), or say, Independent, Independent, have I not already got an *independence*? That was a clever way of the old Puritans, pun-divinity. My dear friend, think what a sad pity it would be to bury such *parts* in heathen countries, among nasty, unconvertible, horse-belching, Tartar-people? Some say they are Cannibals; and then, conceive a Tartar-fellow *eating* my friend, and adding the *cool malignity* of mustard and vinegar! I am afraid 'tis the reading of Chaucer⁵ has misled you; his foolish stories about Cambuscan, and the ring, and the horse of brass. Believe me, there are no such things,

¹ The wild banter to Manning, with exuberant fictions alleging the passing of Wordsworth and of St Paul's, is the more entrancing when one knows that it springs from a real reluctance to cope with foreign things, large spaces and *Distant Correspondents*; cf. 'My attachments are all local.' (p. 140).

² Reference to a mediæval legend of a Christian Church in Asia, with pope of that name.

³ *Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed?*
Is the King dead? The empire unpossessed?

Rich. III., iv. 4.

⁴ Allusion to David Hartley's *Observations on Man*, 1749.

⁵ I.e., in *The Squire's Tale*.

'tis all the poet's *invention* ; but if there were such darling things as old Chaucer sings, I would *up* behind you on the horse of brass, and frisk off for Prester John's country. But these are all tales ; a horse of brass never flew, and a king's daughter never talked with birds ! The Tartars, really, are a cold, *insipid*, *smouchy* set. You'll be sadly moped (if you are not eaten) among them. Pray *try* and cure yourself. Take hellebore (the counsel is Horace's,¹ 'twas none of my thought *originally*). Shave yourself oftener. Eat no saffron, for saffron-eaters contract a terrible Tartar-like yellow. Pray, to avoid the fiend. Eat nothing that gives the heart-burn. *Shave the upper lip*. Go about like an European. Read no books of voyages (they are nothing but lies), only now and then a romance, to keep the fancy *under*. Above all, don't go to any sights of *wild beasts*. *That has been your ruin*. Accustom yourself to write familiar letters, on common subjects, to your friends in England, such as are of a moderate understanding. And think about common things more. . . . I supped last night with Rickman, and met a merry *natural* captain, who pleases himself vastly with once having made a pun at Otaheite in the O. language. 'Tis the same man who said Shakespeare he liked, because he was so *much of the gentleman*. Rickman is a man 'absolute in all numbers'.² I think I may one day bring you acquainted, if you do not go to Tartary first ; for you'll never come back. Have a care, my dear friend, of *Anthropophagi* ! their stomachs are always craving. 'Tis terrible to be weighed out at fivepence a-pound ; to sit at table (the reverse of fishes in Holland), not as a guest, but as a meat.

God bless you : do come to England. Air and exercise may do great things. Talk with some minister. Why not your father ?

God dispose all for the best. I have discharged my duty.

'Down with the Pagodas'

CHARLES LAMB TO THOMAS MANNING

25 December, 1815

Dear old friend and absentee,—This is Christmas-day 1815 with us ; what it may be with you I don't know, the 12th of June next year

¹ *Sat.*, II, 3, 80-83.

² Cf. Milton P. L., VIII, 421.

perhaps ; and if it should be the consecrated season with you, I don't see how you can keep it. You have no turkeys ; you would not desecrate the festival by offering up a withered Chinese bantam, instead of the savoury grand Norfolkian holocaust, that smokes all around my nostrils at this moment from a thousand firesides. Then what puddings have you? Where will you get holly to stick in your churches, or churches to stick your dried tea-leaves (that must be the substitute) in? What memorials you can have of the holy time, I see not. A chopped missionary or two may keep up the thin idea of Lent and the wilderness ; but what standing evidence have you of the Nativity?—'tis our rosy-checked, homestalled divines, whose faces shine to the tune of *unto us a child* ; faces fragrant with the mince-pies of half a century, that alone can authenticate the cheerful mystery. I feel, I feel my bowels refreshed with the holy tide—my zeal is great against the unedified heathen. Down with the Pagodas—down with the idols—Ching-chong-fo—and his foolish priesthood! Come out of Babylon, O my friend! for her time is come, and the child that is native, and the Proselyte of her gates, shall kindle and smoke together! And in sober sense what makes you so long from among us, Manning? You must not expect to see the same England again which you left.

Empires have been overturned, crowns trodden into dust, the face of the western world quite changed : your friends have all got old—those you left blooming—myself (who am one of the few that remember you) those golden hairs which you recollect my taking a pride in, turned to silvery and grey. Mary has been dead and buried many years—she desired to be buried in the silk gown you sent her. Rickman, that you remember active and strong, now walks out supported by a servant-maid and a stick. Martin Burney is a very old man. The other day an aged woman knocked at my door, and pretended to my acquaintance ; it was long before I had the most distant cognition of her ; but at last together we made her out to be Louisa, the daughter of Mrs. Topham, formerly Mrs. Morton, who had been Mrs. Reynolds, formerly Mrs. Kenney, whose first husband was Holcroft, the dramatic writer of the last century. St. Paul's Church is a heap of ruins ; the Monument isn't half so high as you knew it, divers parts being successively taken down which the ravages of time had rendered dangerous ; the horse at Charing Cross is gone, no one knows whither,—and all this has taken place while you have been settling whether Ho-hing-tong should be spelt with a — or a —. For aught I see

you had almost as well remain where you are, and not come like a Struldbug¹ into a world where few were born when you went away. Scarce here and there one will be able to make out your face ; all your opinions will be out of date, your jokes obsolete, your puns rejected with fastidiousness as wit of the last age. Your way of mathematics has already given way to a new method, which after all is I believe the old doctrine of Maclaurin, new-vamped up with what he borrowed of the negative quality of fluxions from Euler.

Poor Godwin! I was passing his tomb the other day in Cripplegate churchyard. There are some verses upon it written by Miss Hayes, which if I thought good enough I would send you. He was one of those who would have hailed your return, not with boisterous shouts and clamours, but with the complacent congratulations of a philosopher anxious to promote knowledge as leading to happiness—but his systems and his theories are ten feet deep in Cripplegate mould. Coleridge is just dead, having lived just long enough to close the eyes of Wordsworth, who paid the debt to nature but a week or two before. Poor Col., but two days before he died he wrote to a bookseller proposing an epic poem on the *Wanderings of Cain*, in twenty-four books. It is said he has left behind him more than forty thousand treatises in criticism and metaphysics, but few of them in a state of completion. They are now destined, perhaps, to wrap up spices. You see what mutations the busy hand of Time has produced, while you have consumed in foolish voluntary exile that time which might have gladdened your friends—benefited your country ; but reproaches are useless. Gather up the wretched reliques, my friend, as fast as you can, and come to your old home. I will rub my eyes and try to recognise you. We will shake withered hands together, and talk of old things—of St. Mary's Church, and the barber's opposite, where the young students in mathematics used to assemble. Poor Crisp, that kept it afterwards, set up a fruiterer's shop in Trumpington-street, and for aught I know, resides there still, for I saw the name up in the last journey I took there with my sister just before she died. I suppose you heard that I had left the India House, and gone into the Fish-mongers' Almshouses over the bridge. I have a little cabin there, small and homely ; but you shall be welcome to it. You like oysters, and to open them yourself ; I'll get you some if you come in oyster

¹ A being in *Gulliver* destined to perpetual existence.

time. Marshall, Godwin's old friend, is still alive, and talks of the faces you used to make.¹

Come as soon as you can.

C. LAMB

'Such Buds'

CHARLES LAMB TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

9 March, 1822

Dear Coleridge,

It gives me great satisfaction to hear that the pig turned out so well : they are interesting creatures at a certain age. What a pity such buds should blow out into the maturity of rank bacon! You had all some of the crackling and brain sauce. Did you remember to rub it with butter, and gently dredge it a little, just before the crisis? Did the eyes come away kindly with no Oedipean avulsion?² Was the crackling the colour of the ripe pomegranate? Had you no complement of boiled neck of mutton before it, to blunt the edge of delicate desire? Did you flesh maiden teeth in it? Not that *I* sent the pig, or can form the remotest guess what part Owen³ could play in the business. I never knew him give away anything in my life. He would not begin with strangers. I suspect the pig, after all, was meant for me ; but at the unlucky juncture of time being absent, the present somehow went round to Highgate. To confess an honest truth, a pig is one of those things which I could never think of sending away. Teal, widgeon, snipes, barn-door fowls, ducks, geese—your tame villatic things⁴—Welsh mutton, collars of brawn, sturgeon, fresh or pickled, your potted char, Swiss cheeses, French pies, early grapes, muscadines, I impart as freely unto my friends as to myself. They are but self-extended ; but pardon me if I stop somewhere. Where the fine feeling of benevolence giveth a higher smack than the sensual rarity, there my friends (or any good man) may command me ; but pigs are pigs, and I myself therein am nearest to myself. Nay, I should think it an affront, an undervaluing done to Nature who bestowed

¹ This item of the fantastic letter is true, for Lamb appreciates elsewhere Ms' 'thousand faces running down through all the keys of idiotism'.

² The King of Thebes in frenzy put out his own eyes.

³ Lamb's landlord.

⁴ Cf. Milton's *Samson*, I. 1695, 'tame villatic fowl'.

such a boon upon me, if in a churlish mood I parted with the precious gift. One of the bitterest pangs of remorse I ever felt was when a child—when my kind old aunt had strained her pocket-strings to bestow a sixpenny whole plum-cake upon me. In my way home through the Borough I met a venerable old man, not a mendicant, but thereabouts ; a look-beggar, not a verbal petitioner ; and in the coxcombry of taught charity I gave away the cake to him. I walked on a little in all the pride of an Evangelical peacock, when of a sudden my old aunt's kindness crossed me ; the sum it was to her ; the pleasure she had a right to expect that I—not the old imposter—should take in eating her cake ; the ingratitude by which, under the colour of a Christian virtue, I had frustrated her cherished purpose. I sobbed, wept, and took it to heart so grievously, that I think I never suffered the like ; and I was right. It was a piece of unfeeling hypocrisy, and it proved a lesson to me ever after. The cake has long been masticated, consigned to the dunghill with the ashes of that unseasonable pauper. But when Providence, who is better to us than all our aunts, gives me a pig, remembering my temptation and my fall, I shall endeavour to act towards it more in the spirit of the donor's purpose.

Yours (short of pig) to command in everything.

' I Want Individuals '

CHARLES LAMB TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

20 March, 1822

A letter from you is very grateful ; I have not seen a Kendal postmark so long ! We are pretty well save colds and rheumatics, and a certain deadness to every thing, which I think I may date from poor John's loss,¹ and another accident or two at the same time, that has made me almost bury myself at Dalston, where yet I see more faces than I could wish. Deaths over-set one and put one out long after the recent grief. Two or three have died within this last two twelvemths., and so many parts of me have been numbed. One sees a picture, reads an anecdote, starts a casual fancy, and thinks to tell of it to this person in preference to every other—the person is gone whom it would have peculiarly suited. It won't do for *another*. Every departure destroys

¹ Lamb's brother had died in the previous October.

a class of sympathies. There's Captain Burney gone!—what fun has whist now? what matters it what you lead, if you can no longer fancy him looking over you? One never hears any thing, but the image of the particular person occurs with whom alone almost you would care to share the intelligence. Thus one distributes oneself about—and now for so many parts of me I have lost the market. Common natures do not suffice me. Good people, as they are called, won't serve. I want individuals. I am made up of queer points and I want so many answering needles. The going away of friends does not make the remainder more precious. It takes so much from them as there was a common link. A. B. and C. make a party. A dies. B. not only loses A. but all A.'s part in C. C. loses A.'s part in B., and so the alphabet sickens by subtraction of interchangeables. I express myself muddily, *capite dolente*. I have a dulling cold. My theory is to enjoy life, but the practice is against it. I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke. You don't know how wearisome it is to breathe the air of four pent walls without relief day after day, all the golden hours of the day between 10 and 4 without ease or interposition. *Tædet me harum quotidianarum formarum*,¹ these pestilential clerk faces always in one's dish. O for a few years between the grave and the desk! . . . I dare not whisper to myself a Pension on this side of absolute incapacitation and infirmity, till years have sucked me dry. *Otium cum indignitate*.² I had thought in a green old age (O green thought!) to have retired to Ponder's End—emblematic name how beautiful! in the Ware road, there to have made up my accounts with Heaven and the Company, *toddling* about between it and Cheshunt, anon stretching on some fine Izaak Walton morning to Hoddesdon or Amwell, careless as a Beggar, but walking, walking ever, till I fairly walked myself off my legs, dying walking!

The hope is gone. I sit like *Philomel* all day (but not singing) with my breast against this thorn of a Desk. . . .

¹ 'I am tired of these everyday figures' (Terence)

² '*Otium cum dignitate*' was Cicero's wish, 'Leisure with dignity', for Roman retirement. Lamb makes variants.

Book Drudgery

CHARLES LAMB TO BERNARD BARTON¹

9 January, 1823

‘Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support, beyond what the chance employ of Booksellers would afford you.’

Throw yourself rather, my dear Sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you had but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the Booksellers. They are Turks and Tartars, when they have poor Authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm’s length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors want for bread, some repining, others envying the blessed security of a spunging-house, all agreeing they had rather have been Tailors, Weavers, what not? rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse. You know not what a rapacious, dishonest set these booksellers are. Ask even Southey, who (a single case almost) has made a fortune by book drudgery, what he has found them. O you know not, may you never know, the miseries of subsisting by authorship. ’Tis a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine, but a slavery worse than all slavery to be a bookseller’s dependant, to drudge your brains for pots of ale and breasts of mutton, to change your free thoughts and voluntary numbers for ungracious TASK-WORK. The booksellers hate us. The reason I take to be, that, contrary to other trades, in which the Master gets all the credit (a Jeweller or Silversmith for instance), and the Journeyman, who really does the fine work, is in the background, in *our* work the world gives all the credit to Us, whom *they* consider as *their* Journey-men, and therefore do they hate us, and cheat us, and oppress us, and would wring the blood of us out, to put another sixpence in their mechanic pouches. I contend, that a Bookseller has a *relative honesty* towards Authors, not like his honesty to the rest of the world. B(aldwin), who first engag’d me as Elia, has not paid me up yet (nor any of us without repeated mortifying applies), yet how the Knave fawned while I was of service to him! Yet I dare say the fellow is

¹ A good Quaker friend and writer of pious poems. The raillery of genius sometimes puzzled Barton. But Lamb could be *enfant terrible*, cf. pp. 141 and 142.

punctual in settling his milk-score, &c. Keep to your Bank, and the Bank will keep you. Trust not to the Public, you may hang, starve, drown yourself, for anything that worthy *Personage* cares. I bless every star that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leaden-hall. Sit down, good B. B., in the Banking Office ; what, is there not from six to Eleven P.M. 6 days in the week, and is there not all Sunday? Fie, what a superfluity of man's time,—if you could think so! Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. O the corroding, torturing, tormenting thoughts, that disturb the Brain of the unlucky wight, who must draw upon it for daily sustenance. Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment, look upon them as Lovers' quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome, dead timber of a desk, that makes me live. . . .

A Bad Cold

CHARLES LAMB TO BERNARD BARTON

9 January, 1824

Dear B.B.

Do you know what it is to succumb under an insurmountable day-mare,—‘a whorson lethargy’, Falstaff calls it,—an indisposition to do anything, or to be anything,—a total deadness and distaste, a suspension of vitality,—an indifference to locality,—a numb, soporifical, good-for-nothingness,—an ossification all over,—an oysterlike insensibility to the passing events,—a mind-stupor,—a brawny defiance to the needles of a thrusting-in conscience? Did you ever have a very bad cold, with a total irresolution to submit to water-gruel processes? This has been for many weeks my lot and my excuse. My fingers drag heavily over this paper, and to my thinking it is three-and-twenty furlongs from here to the end of this demi-sheet. I have not a thing to say ; nothing is of more importance than another ; I am flatter than a denial or a pancake ; emptier than Judge Park's wig when the head is in it ; duller than a country stage when the actors are off it ; a cipher, an O! I acknowledge life at all, only by an occasional convulsional cough, and a permanent phlegmatic pain in the chest. I am weary of the world ; and the world is weary of me. My day is gone into twilight, and I don't think it worth the expense of candles. My wick hath a thief in it, but I can't muster courage to snuff it. I inhale suffocation ; I can't distinguish veal from mutton ; nothing interests me. 'Tis

twelve o'clock, and Thurtell is just now coming out upon the New Drop, Jack Ketch alertly tucking up his greasy sleeves to do the last office of mortality, yet cannot I elicit a groan or a moral reflection. If you told me the world will be at an end to-morrow, I should just say, 'Will it?' I have not volition enough left to dot my *i*'s, much less to comb my eyebrows; my eyes are set in my head; my brains are gone out to see a poor relation in Moorfields, and they did not say when they'd come back again; my skull is a Grub Street attic, to let—not so much as a joint stool or a crack'd jordan¹ left in it; my hand writes, not I, from habit, as chickens run about a little, when their heads are off. O for a vigorous fit of gout, cholic, toothache,—an earwig in my auditory, a fly in my visual organs! Pain is life—the sharper, the more evidence of life; but this apathy, this death! Did you ever have an obstinate cold,—a six or seven weeks' unintermitting chill and suspension of hope, fear, conscience, and everything? Yet do I try all I can to cure it; I try wine, and spirits, and smoking, and snuff in unsparing quantities, but they all only seem to make me worse, instead of better. I sleep in a damp room, but it does me no good; I come home late o'nights, but do not find any visible amendment! . . .

It is just fifteen minutes after twelve; Thurtell is by this time a good way on his journey, baiting at Scorpion perhaps; Ketch is bargaining for his cast coat and waistcoat; the Jew demurs at first at three half-crowns; but, on consideration that he may get somewhat by showing 'em in the town, finally closes.

'Till Man . . . Luckily Sinned'

CHARLES LAMB TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

(P.M. 22 January, 1830)

. . . O never let the lying poets be believed, who 'tice men from the cheerful haunts of streets—or think they mean it not of a country village. In the ruins of Palmyra I could gird myself up to solitude, or muse to the snorings of the Seven Sleepers;² but to have a little teazing image of a town about one, country folks that do not look like country folks, shops two yards square, half a dozen apples and two penn'orth of overlooked gingerbread for the lofty fruiterers of Oxford

¹ We—that is, some of us—say 'jerry'.

² Christians of Ephesus, saved in the legend from persecutors by spell of sleep.

Street—and, for the immortal book and print stalls, a circulating library that stands still, where the shew-picture is a last year's Valentine, and whither the fame of the last ten Scotch novels has not yet travelled (marry, they just begin to be conscious of the *Red Gauntlet*), to have a new plastered flat church, and to be wishing that it was but a Cathedral. The very blackguards here are degenerate. The topping gentry, stock-brokers. The passengers too many to ensure your quiet, or let you go about whistling, or gaping—too few to be the fine indifferent pageants of Fleet Street. Confining, room-keeping thickest winter is yet more bearable here than the gaudy months. Among one's books at one's fire by candle one is soothed into an oblivion that one is not in the country, but with the light the green fields return, till I gaze, and in a calenture¹ can plunge myself into Saint Gile's. O let no native Londoner imagine that health, and rest and innocent occupation, interchange of converse sweet and recreative study, can make the country any thing better than altogether odious and detestable. A garden was the primitive prison till man with promethean felicity and boldness luckily sinned himself out of it. Thence followd Bablyon, Nineveh, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, playhouses, satires, epigrams, puns—these all came in on the town part, and the thither side of innocence. Man found out inventions. . . .

CHARLES LAMB TO MRS GEORGE DYER ²

22 December, 1834

Dear Mrs. Dyer,—I am very uneasy about a *Book* which I either have lost or left at your house on Thursday. It was the book I went out to fetch from Miss Buffam's, while the tripe was frying. It is called Philip's *Theatrum Poetarum*; but it is an English book. I think I left it in the parlour. It is Mr. Cary's book, and I would not lose it for the world. Pray, if you find it, book it at the 'Swan', Snow Hill, by an Edmonton stage immediately, directed to Mr. Lamb, Church-street, Edmonton, or write to say you cannot find it. I am quite anxious about it. If it is lost, I shall never like tripe again.

With kindest love to Mr. Dyer and all,

Yours truly,

C. LAMB

¹ Delirium that transposes the scene, as in a mirage.

² This was Lamb's last letter. He died five days later.

The Luck the Cat Brought

MARY LAMB TO BARBARA BETHAM

2 November, 1814

We still live in Temple Lane, but I am now sitting in a room you never saw. Soon after you left us we were distressed by the cries of a cat, which seemed to proceed from the garrets adjoining to ours, and only separated from ours by the locked door on the farther side of my brother's bedroom, which you know was the little room at the top of the kitchen stairs. We had the lock forced and let poor puss out from behind a panel of the wainscot, and she lived with us from that time, for we were in gratitude bound to keep her, as she had introduced us to four untenanted unowned rooms, and by degrees we have taken possession of these unclaimed apartments—first putting up lines to dry our clothes, then moving my brother's bed into one of these, more commodious than his own room ; and last winter, my brother being unable to pursue a work he had begun, owing to the kind interruptions of friends who were more at leisure than himself, I persuaded him that he might write at ease in one of these rooms, as he could not then hear the door knock, or hear himself denied to be at home, which was sure to make him call out and convict the poor maid in a fib. Here, I said, he might be almost really not at home. So I put in an old grate, and made him a fire in the largest of these garrets, and carried in his own table and one chair, and bid him write away, and consider himself as much alone as if he were in some lodging in the midst of Salisbury Plain, or any other wide, unfrequented place where he could expect few visitors to break in upon his solitude. I left him quite delighted with his new acquisition, but in a few hours he came down again with a sadly dismal face. He could do nothing, he said, with those bare whitewashed walls before his eyes. He could not write in that dull unfurnished prison.

The next day, before he came home from his office, I had gathered up various bits of old carpeting to cover the floor ; and, to a little break the blank look of the bare walls, I hung up a few old prints that used to ornament the kitchen ; and after dinner, with great boast of what an improvement I had made, I took Charles once more into his new study. A week of busy labours followed, in which I think you would not have disliked to be our assistant. My brother and I almost covered the walls with prints, for which purpose he cut out every print

from every book in his old library, coming in every now and then to ask my leave to strip a fresh poor author—which he might not do, you know, without my permission, as I am elder sister. There was such pasting, such consultation upon these portraits, and where a series of pictures from Ovid, Milton, and Shakespeare would show to most advantage, and in what obscure corner authors of humble rank should be allowed to tell their stories. All the books gave up their stories but one—a translation from Ariosto—a delicious set of four-and-twenty prints, and for which I had marked out a conspicuous place ; when lo! we found at the moment the scissors were going to work that a part of the poem was printed at the back of every picture. What a cruel disappointment! To conclude this long story about nothing, the poor despised garret is now called the print-room, and is become our most familiar sitting-room.

Homely Sense in Heavy Times

ANN CONSTABLE TO JOHN CONSTABLE

East Bergholt, 6 January, 1815

My dear Son John,—I send you a mother's Christmas gift in the form of six new shirts. Four of them are hemp, and you said you should like to try them for working shirts. The other two are Sunday ones, with the collars cut to the pattern of your cousin, —'s. How you will like them I cannot tell. But I hope it will be the only imitation of him you will try, with the exception of the kind intentions of his heart and his dutiful affection to his mother and sisters, which will spring up and show themselves through all the confusion in his affairs. The magnitude of his debts really terrifies me. Oh, my dear John, pray keep out of debt—that earthly Tartarus! I return you the pocket-book. It is very pretty, and much increased in value for the donor's sake,¹ who, I hope, will one time or other, be rewarded better than by a *poor* artist. You must try hard for fame and gain. We have lived to see the beginning of a new year. Who may be permitted to see the close of it God only knows. To those who do may it prove a happy one, and to you amongst that number.

¹ *The donor* was Maria Bicknell, who became the painter's devoted wife.

'In Good, Plain English'

THE REV JOHN FISHER TO JOHN CONSTABLE

Osmington, near Dorchester,
27 August, 1816

MY DEAR CONSTABLE,—I am not a great letter writer, and when I take pen in hand I generally come to the point at once. I therefore write to tell you that I intend to be in London on Tuesday evening, the 24th ; and on Wednesday shall hold myself ready and happy to marry you. There, you see, I have used no roundabout phrases, but said the thing at once in good plain English. So, do you follow my example, and get you to your lady, and, instead of blundering out long sentences about the 'the hymeneal altar', &c., say that on Wednesday, September 25th, you are ready to marry her. If she replies, like a sensible woman, as I suspect she is, 'Well, John, here is my hand, I am ready,' all well and good. If she says 'Yes, but another day will be more convenient,' let her name it, and I am at her service. And now, my dear fellow, I have another point to settle ; and that I may gain it I shall put it in the shape of a request. It is that if you find, upon your marriage, your purse is strong enough to make a bit of a detour, I shall reckon it a great pleasure if you and your bride will come and stay some time with my wife and me. That lady joins with me in my request. The country here is wonderfully wild and sublime, and well worth a painter's visit. My house commands a singularly beautiful view, and you may study from your very window. You shall have a plate set by the side of your easel, without your sitting down to dinner. We never see company, and I have brushes, paints, and canvas in abundance. Of an evening, we will sit over our autumnal fireside, read a sensible book, perhaps a sermon, and, after prayers, get us to bed, at peace with ourselves and all the world. Since I have been quiet down here, out of the way of the turmoil and bustle of ——'s great dinners, I have taken much to my easel, and have improved much. Your visit will be of wonderful advantage to me. Tell your lady that I long to be better acquainted with her, as does Mrs Fisher ; and I beg her to use her influence with you to bring you to see

Yours, with sincerity,

JOHN FISHER

Of Concentration

FROM JOHN CONSTABLE TO JOHN FISHER

Charlotte Street, 17 November, 1824

I am planning a large picture, and I regard all you say, but I do not enter into that notion of varying one's plans to keep the public in good humour. Change of weather and effect will always afford variety. What if Vander Velde had quitted his sea-pieces, or Ruysdael his waterfalls, or Hobbema his native woods? The world would have lost so many features in art. I know that you wish for no material alteration, but I have to combat from high quarters—even from Lawrence—the plausible argument that *subject* makes the picture. Perhaps you think an evening effect might do ; perhaps it might start me some new admirers, but I should lose many old ones. I imagine myself driving a nail ; I have driven it some way, and by persevering I may drive it home ; by quitting it to attack others, though I may amuse myself, I do not advance beyond the first, while that particular nail stands still. No man who can do any one thing well will be able to do any other different thing equally well ; and this is true, even of Shakespeare, the greatest master of variety.¹

¹ *Subject makes the picture* : Constable's combatting of this peep-show fallacy affords one of many proofs in his letters that the great precursor of the Impressionists was as far beyond his age in critical perspicuity as he was in fresh mastery. E. V. Lucas (in *Constable the Painter*) says that C. had no sense of humour. In the light of the foregoing remarks the following excerpts may have special interest.

30 September, 1823

TO JOHN FISHER :

'I was at the private view of the *Diorama* ; it is in part a transparency. The spectator is in a dark chamber, and it is very pleasing, and has great illusion. It is without the pale of the art, because its object is deception. The art pleases by *reminding*, not by *deceiving*. The place was filled with foreigners, and I seemed to be in a cage of magpies.'

15 April, 1824

TO JOHN FISHER

'I dined the other day with —, to be introduced to a lady paintress, "with whom I should be much pleased." I found a laughing, ignorant, fat, uncouth old woman, but very good-natured, and she gave me no trouble as she wanted no instruction from me. When she told me of an oil proper for painting, I told her it would not do, but she assured me it would, and that she could give

Brighton and 'The Business of a Painter'

FROM JOHN CONSTABLE TO JOHN FISHER

Brighton, 29 May, 1824

I am busy here, but I dislike the place, and miss any letter from you. I am, however, getting on with my French affairs; one of the largest is quite complete, and is my best in sparkle with repose, which is my struggle just now. Brighton is the receptacle of the fashion and off-scouring of London. The magnificence of the sea, and its, to use your own beautiful expression, 'everlasting voice,' is drowned in the din and tumult of stage-coaches, gigs, flies, &c., and the beach is only Piccadilly, or worse, by the seaside. Ladies dressed and undressed; gentlemen in morning-gowns and slippers, or without them or anything else, about knee-deep in the breakers; footmen, children, nursery-maids, dogs, boys, fishermen, and Preventive Service men with hangers and pistols; rotten fish, and those hideous amphibious animals, the old bathing women, whose language, both in oaths and voice, resembles men, all mixed together in endless and indecent confusion. The genteeler part, or Marine Parade, is still more unnatural, with its trimmed and neat appearance, and the dandy jetty or Chain Pier, with its long and elegant strides into the sea a full quarter of a mile. In short, there is nothing here for a painter but the breakers and the sky, which have been lovely indeed, and always varying. . . .

Last Tuesday, the finest day that ever was, we went to the Dyke, which is, in fact, the remains of a Roman encampment, overlooking one of the grandest natural landscapes in the world, and consequently a scene the most unfit for a picture. It is the business of a painter not to contend with nature, and put such a scene, a valley filled with imagery fifty miles long, on a canvas of a few inches; but to make something

me no greater proof of it than that one of her pictures was painted entirely with it.'

22 August, 1831

TO R. L. LESLIE

'I have bought a little drawing of John Varley, the conjuror, who is now a beggar—but a *fat* & a *sturdy* one. He told me how to do landscape & was so kind as to point out all my defects. The price of the little drawing was Guinea & half, but a Guinea only to an *Artist*—however I insisted on his taking the larger sum, as he had clearly proved to me that I was no artist!!'

out of nothing, in attempting which he must almost of necessity become poetical—but you understand all this better than I.

Grouse against Berkeley

SYDNEY SMITH¹ TO LADY HOLLAND

Howick, 9 September, 1808

I take the liberty to send you two brace of grouse,—curious, because killed by a Scotch metaphysician ; in other and better language, they are mere ideas, shot by other ideas, out of a pure intellectual notion, called a gun.

I found a great number of philosophers in Edinburgh, in a high state of obscurity and metaphysics.

Dugald Stewart is extremely alarmed by the repeated assurances I made that he was the author of *Plymley's Letters*,²—or generally considered so to be.

I have been staying here two days on my return and two days on my journey to Edinburgh. An excellent man, Lord Grey, and pleasant to be seen in the bosom of his family. I approve very highly also of his lady.

Ever most affectionately yours

No Infidelity

THE REV SYDNEY SMITH TO LADY HOLLAND

23 May, 1811

How very odd, dear Lady Holland, to ask me to dine with you on Sunday, the 9th, when I am coming to stay with you from the 5th to

¹ The shining wit of this busy Whig and benevolent cleric has something of aristocratic affectation that anticipates the comedies of Oscar Wilde, cf., 'Luttrell came over for the day ; he was very agreeable, but spoke too lightly, I thought, of veal soup.' (To Fazakerly, 1829). In another place he is so congratulatory on the arrival of a daughter as to aver that little boys should be drowned at birth. But he was loved everywhere for good-humour as well as brilliance.

² These were letter-essays in support of Catholic Emancipation, and Smith himself was the author.

the 12th! It is like giving a gentleman an assignation for Wednesday when you are going to marry him on the preceding Sunday,—an attempt to combine the stimulus of gallantry with the security of connubial relations. I do not propose to be guilty of the slightest infidelity to you while I am at Holland House, except you dine in town ; and then it will not be infidelity, but spirited recrimination.

SYDNEY SMITH TO LUCY

London, 22 July, 1835

Lucy, Lucy, my dear child, don't tear your frock : tearing frocks is not of itself a proof of genius ; but write as your mother writes, act as your mother acts ; be frank, loyal, affectionate, simple, honest ; and then integrity or laceration of frock is of little import.

And Lucy, dear child, mind your arithmetic. You know, in the first sum of yours I ever saw, there was a mistake. You had carried two (as a cab is licensed to do) and you ought, dear Lucy, to have carried but one. Is this a trifle? What would life be without arithmetic, but a scene of horrors?

You are going to Boulogne, the city of debts, peopled by men who never understood arithmetic ; by the time you return, I shall probably have received my first paralytic stroke, and shall have lost all recollection of you ; therefore I now give you my parting advice. Don't marry anybody who has not a tolerable understanding and a thousand a year, and God bless you, dear child!

' Warm and not Weak '

SYDNEY SMITH TO MRS HOLLAND

. 11 December, 1835

My dearest Child,—

Few are the adventures of a Canon travelling gently over good roads to his benefice. In my way to Reading I had, for my companion, the Mayor of Bristol, when I preached that sermon in favour of the Catholics. He recognized me, and we did very well together. I was terribly afraid that he would stop at the same inn, but he (thank God) stopped at the *Crown*, as a loyal man, and I, as a rude one, went on to the *Bear*. Civil waiters, wax candles, and off again the next morning, with my friend and Sir W. W——, a very shrewd, clever, coarse, entertain-

ing man, with whom I skirmished *à l'amiable* all the way to Bath. At Bath, candles still waxen, and waiters still more profound. Being, since my travels, very much gallicized in my character, I ordered a pint of claret ; I found it incomparably the best wine I ever tasted ; it disappeared with a rapidity which surprises me even at this distance of time. The next morning, in the coach by eight, with a handsome valetudinarian lady, upon which the coach produced the same effect as a steam-packet would do. I proposed weak, warm brandy and water ; she thought at first, it would produce inflammation of the stomach, but presently requested to have it warm and *not* weak, and she took it to the last drop, as I did the claret. All well here. God bless you, dearest child. Love to Holland.

' Such a One I was this Present '

SYDNEY SMITH TO M. EUGENE ROBIN¹

Paris, 29 June, 1844

Sir,—

Your application to me does me honour, and requires, on your part, no sort of apology. It is scarcely possible to speak much of self, and I have little or nothing to tell which has not been told before in my preface.

I am seventy-four years of age ; and being Canon of St. Paul's in London, and a rector of a parish in the country, my time is divided equally between town and country. I am living amongst the best society in the metropolis, and at ease in my circumstances ; in tolerable health, a mild Whig, a tolerating Churchman, and much given to talking, laughing and noise. I dine with the rich in London, and physic the poor in the country ; passing from the sauces of Dives to the sores of Lazarus. I am, upon the whole, a happy man ; have found the world an entertaining world, and am thankful to providence for the part allotted to me in it. . . .

¹ M. Robin had asked the Canon for some particulars for an article he was writing for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

The Graces

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR TO LADY BLESSINGTON

Firenze, 16 March, 1835

... The Opium-eater calls Coleridge 'the largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and most comprehensive that has yet existed among men'. Impiety to Shakespeare! treason to Milton! I give up the rest, even Bacon. Certainly since that day, we have seen nothing at all comparable to him. Byron and Scott were but gun-flints to a granite mountain; Wordsworth has one angle of resemblance; Southey has written more, and all well, much admirably. Forster has said grand things about me; but I sit upon the earth with my heels under me, looking up devoutly to the last glorious ascension. Never ask me about the rest. If you do, I shall only answer, in the cries that you are very likely to hear at this moment from your window. 'Ground ivy! ground ivy! ground ivy!'—

Cannot you teach those about you to write somewhat more purely? I am very fastidious. Three days ago I was obliged to correct a friend of mine, a man of fashion, who so far forgot the graces, to say to a lady, 'I have not often been in her *company*.' Say *presence*; we are in the company of men; in the presence of angels and of women. . . .

No Flattery

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR TO ROSE PAYNTER

Paris, 26 May, 1841

... Probably you have seen in the papers all about the elopement.¹ The lady is frightful and the gentleman a fool. That of course, in running off with an ugly woman—but equally in all things beside. He tried his fortune with Mlle. Rachel, who replied that her profession was her *parti*, and that she desired no other. This is wise; but it is a species of wisdom more likely to diminish than increase. She will change her mind when she grows old, and when nobody, not even a Frenchman, can love her. How few are aware of the right moment, men or women! Generally the choice is made too soon, and then the repentance is necessarily the longer, and usually the more poignant.

¹ Of the Spanish princess, Isabella, with a Polish gentleman, Count Geropski.

Out of reverence for the talents of Mlle. Rachel let us hope that she may never, soon or late, be destined to act a part in a domestic tragedy. I forgot to say that I visited Versailles again. A few of the old portraits are interesting. It is wonderful how resemblances are transmitted through several generations. Here is a portrait of a Dauphine of Auvergne. I remember to have seen a descendant of hers surprisingly like it, after two centuries and more. The most beautiful face among the portraits is the Queen of Prussia's, by Gosse. Never was wounded pride so delicately exprest. She is in the act of being received by Napoleon. She suppresses the swelling heart and rises with majestic beauty above the man who conquered only her kingdom. You yourself would not have been greater in her place ; and only a few of your enthusiastic admirers would find a greater beauty in the expression of your countenance. You see I have not learnt to flatter by my recent intercourse with the French. . . .

Rebuke

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR TO LORD NORMANBY

(circa) 1858

My Lord,

Now I am recovering from an illness of several months' duration, aggravated no little by your lordship's rude reception of me at the Cascine, in presence of my family and innumerable Florentines, I must remind you in the gentlest terms of the occurrence.

We are both of us old men, my lord, and are verging on decrepitude and imbecility. Else my note might be more energetic. I am not unobservant of distinctions. You by the favour of a minister are Marquis of Normanby. I by the grace of God am

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

Wit versus Sand

SIR CHARLES NAPIER¹ TO LADY CAMPBELL

?16 January, 1843

My Dear Cousin,

Paper, pen and ink are very scarce, so are clean shirts : but that don't matter, as nobody sees us but your namesakes the camels, and they are not nice. However, we are clean, though we look dirty. The sand scours us : it pours into the nape of one's neck, and so progresses downwards to the toes of our boots in a constant succession of little avalanches from rib to rib, till it locates or squats under the soles of our feet. Our mouths, ears, eyes, noses, and hair are all full—our teeth all ground quite short, our skin growing daily into excellent fish-skin texture, our shirts growing black and our boots brown, and I have (as indeed have most of us) a beard that would do honour to Moses himself. Some of our fat-faced, red-faced, rosy-gilled, plump-cheeked, inveterate John Bulls do shave yet, and pretty examples of decency they are. They use thin jagged razors, for the sand on the strops makes all the razors into accomplished and talented saws : and so the 'apple-faced heroes' have faces that look as if they and all their race had an hereditary leprosy. 'And what the devil brings you into the desert?' you will say. Oh, that is a story as long as my beard, and I have no time to tell you : and I suppose when the Tories have skinned Lord Auckland alive, the Whigs will skin Lord Ellenborough in revenge : and then I, as one of his slaves, will be hanged up, and I will leave a true and posthumous history of my life, and one chapter shall be 'How the General got into the Sandy Desert—How his beard grew Long and his Shirt Dirty, and other Strange things.' Then you will see all about it, and how I got out again : but of that I cannot at present speak with propriety, seeing as how that I am not out yet! which I assure you is a very interesting affair. Your friend Captain Archer is at Belgar, some where about 1,500 miles distant : but if I come across him, be assured I will show him all the attention in my power : as to my wife and girls, they are 1,000 miles from me, but I hope are well. I have not seen them since August last, and God knows when I shall! for into this infernal climate I cannot bring them : nothing but sucking devils can

¹ This good correspondent Napier subdued Scinde by his fearless penetration of the desert, and then sent the brief dispatch '*Peccavi*'. He was so hirsute himself that his men called him Fagin.

live here! However, I suppose I shall be let back to India in time : at present I cannot go. I must settle Scinde, or Scinde settle me : and I think the former, for I never was so well or so strong in my life, at least not for the last ten years, ' but oud, my dear, oud,' a comtplain not to be got rid of. My ' threescore ' are gone and my ' ten ' fast going. However, at this particular moment I find no want of ' sand ' in my glass. The whole of the desert is full of sea-shells, and it looks like an ocean of sand, which lies all in ridges, steep on the north side, and sloping towards the south, very like great waves just ready to curl and tumble over : it is very curious, we are all tired of it, and of dragging cannon up and down the sand waves.

And so God bless you and all your dear bright-eyed brood of beauties is the prayer of your affectionate Coz.,

No Rolling at St. John's Wood

THOMAS HOOD TO ONE OF HIS DOCTOR'S DAUGHTERS

17, Elm Tree Road, St. John's Wood,
Monday, April, 1844

My dear May,—

I promised you a letter, and here it is. I was sure to remember it ; for you are as hard to forget, as you are soft to roll down a hill with. What fun it was! only so prickly I thought I had a porcupine in one pocket, and a hedgehog in the other. The next time, before we kiss the éarth we will have its face well shaved. Did you ever go to Greenwich Fair? I should like to go there with you, for I get no rolling at St. John's Wood. Tom and Fanny only like roll and butter, and as for Mrs. Hood, she is for rolling in money.

Tell Dunnie that Tom has set his trap in the balcony and has caught a cold, and tell Jeanie that Fanny has set her foot in the garden, but it has not come up yet. Oh, how I wish it was the season when ' March winds and April showers bring forth *May* flowers! ' for then of course you would give me another pretty little nosegay. Besides it is frosty and foggy weather, which I do not like. The other night, when I came from Stratford, the cold shrivelled me up so, that when I got home I thought I was my own child!

However, I hope we shall all have a merry Christmas ; I mean to come in my most ticklesome waistcoat, and to laugh till I grow fat, or at least streaky. Fanny is to be allowed a glass of wine, Tom's mouth

is to have a *hole* holiday, and Mrs. Hood is to sit up to supper! There will be doings! And then such good things to eat; but, pray, pray, pray, mind they don't boil the baby by mistake for a *plump* pudding instead of a plum one.

Give my love to everybody, from yourself down to Willy, with which and a kiss, I remain, up hill and down dale,

Your affectionate lover,

THOMAS HOOD

'My Mind is Composed'

THOMAS HOOD TO SIR ROBERT PEEL

New Finchley Road, Devonshire Lodge,
(1845)

Dear Sir,

We are not to meet in the flesh. Given over by my physicians and by myself, I am only kept alive by frequent instalments of mulled port wine. In this extremity I feel a comfort,¹ for which I cannot refrain from again thanking you, with all the sincerity of a dying man,—and, at the same time, bidding you a respectful farewell.

Thank God my mind is composed and my reason undisturbed but my race as an author is run. My physical debility finds no tonic virtue in a steel pen, otherwise I would have written one more paper—a forewarning one—against an evil, or the danger of it, arising from a literary movement in which I have had some share, a one-sided humanity, opposite to that Catholic Shakspearian sympathy, which felt with King as well as Peasant, and duly estimated the mortal temptations of both stations. Certain classes at the poles of Society are already too far asunder; it should be the duty of our writers to draw them nearer by kindly attraction, not to aggravate the existing repulsion, and place a wider moral gulf between Rich and Poor, with Hate on the one side and Fear on the other. But I am too weak for this task, the last I had set myself: it is death that stops my pen, you see, and not the pension.

God bless you, Sir, and prosper all your measures for the benefit of my beloved country.

¹ Hood was grateful to the Prime Minister for the transfer of pension to his wife.

Good-bye

THOMAS HOOD TO DR MOIR

1845

Dear Moir,

God bless you and yours, and good-bye! I drop these few lines, as in a bottle from a ship water-logged, and on the brink of foundering, being in the last stage of dropsical debility ; but though suffering in body, serene in mind. So without reversing my union-jack, I await my last lurch. Till which, believe me, dear Moir,

Yours most truly,

Some Rooted Opinions Gathered in India

LORD MACAULAY TO THOMAS FLOWER ELLIS

Ootacamund, 1 July, 1834

... I travelled the whole four hundred miles between this and Madras on men's shoulders. I had an agreeable journey on the whole. I was honoured by an interview with the Rajah of Mysore, who insisted on showing me all his wardrobe, and his picture gallery. He has six or seven coloured English prints not much inferior to those which I have seen in the sanded parlour of a country inn ; *Going to Cover*, *The Death of the Fox*, and so forth. But the *bijou* of this gallery, of which he is as vain as the Grand Duke can be of *Venus*, or Lord Carlisle of the *Three Maries*, is a head of the Duke of Wellington, which has, most certainly, been a sign-post in England.

Yet, after all, the Rajah was by no means the greatest fool whom I found at Mysore. I alighted at a bungalow appertaining to the British Residency. There I found an Englishman who, without any preface, accosted me thus : 'Bray, Mr. Macaulay, do not you think that Buonaparte was the Beast?'¹ 'No, Sir, I cannot say that I do.' 'Sir, he was the Beast. I can prove it, I have found the number 666 in his name. Why, Sir, if he was not the Beast, who was?' This was a puzzling question, and I am not a little vain of my answer. 'Sir,' said I, 'the House of Commons is the Beast. There are 658 members of

¹ The apocalyptic mystery is in *Rev.* xiii. 18, 'Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast : for it is the number of a man : and his number is six hundred threescore and six.'

the House ; and these, with their chief officers,—the three clerks, the Sergeant and his deputy, the Chaplain, the door-keeper, and the librarian, make 666.’ ‘Well, Sir, that is strange. But I can assure you that, if you write Napoleon Buonaparte in Arabic, leaving out only two letters, it will give you 666.’ ‘And pray, Sir, what right have you to leave out two letters? And, as St. John was writing Greek and to Greeks, is it not likely that he would use the Greek rather than the Arabic notation?’ ‘But, Sir,’ said this learned divine, ‘everybody knows that the Greek letters were never used to mark numbers.’ I answered with the meekest look and voice possible : ‘I do not think that everybody knows that. Indeed I have reason to believe that a different opinion,—erroneous no doubt,—is universally embraced by all the small minority who happen to know any Greek.’ So ended the controversy. The man looked at me as if he thought me a very wicked fellow ; and, I dare say, has by this time discovered that if you write my name in Tamul, leaving out T in Thomas, B in Babington, and M in Macaulay, it will give the number of this unfortunate Beast. . . .

I have already entered upon my public functions, and I hope to do some good. The very wigs of the Judges in the Court of King’s Bench would stand on end if they knew how short a chapter my Law of Evidence will form. I am not without many advisers. A native of some fortune in Madras has sent me a paper on legislation. ‘Your honour must know,’ says this judicious person, ‘that the great evil is that men swear falsely in this country. No judge knows what to believe. Surely if your honour can make men to swear truly, your honour’s fame will be great, and the Company will flourish. Now, I know how men may be made to swear truly ; and I will tell your honour for your fame, and for the profit of the Company. Let your honour cut off the great toe of the right foot of every man who swears falsely, whereby your honour’s fame will be extended.’ Is not this an exquisite specimen of legislative wisdom?

I must stop. When I begin to write to England, my pen runs as if it would run on for ever.

'A Private Governess's Trials' ¹

CHARLOTTE BRONTË TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Swarcliffe, 15 June, 1839

... I must not bother you too much with my sorrows, of which I fear you have heard an exaggerated account. If you were near me, perhaps I might be tempted to tell you all, to grow egotistical, and pour out the long history of a private governess's trials and crosses in her first situation. As it is, I will only ask you to imagine the miseries of a reserved wretch like me, thrown at once into the midst of a large family—proud as peacocks and wealthy as Jews—at a time when they were particularly gay, when the house was filled with company—all strangers, people whose faces I had never seen before. In this state I had charge given me of a set of pampered, spoilt, turbulent children, whom I was expected constantly to amuse as well as to instruct. I soon found that the constant demand on my stock of animal spirits reduced them to the lowest state of exhaustion ; at times I felt, and I suppose, seemed depressed. To my astonishment, I was taken to task on the subject by Mrs Sidgwick, with a sternness of manner and a harshness of language scarcely credible ; like a fool, I cried most bitterly. I could not help it ; my spirits quite failed me at first. I thought I had done my best—strained every nerve to please her ; and to be treated in that way, merely because I was shy and sometimes melancholy, was too bad. At first I was for giving all up and going home, but after a little reflection I determined to summon what energy I had and to weather the storm. I said to myself 'I have never yet quitted a place without gaining a friend ; adversity is a good school ; the poor are born to labour, and the dependent to endure.' I resolved to be patient, to command my feelings, and to take what came ; the ordeal, I reflected, would not last many weeks, and I trusted it would do me good. I recollected the fable

¹ Charlotte was probably over-sensitive to her treatment by the Sidgwicks (the reader is recommended to Clement Shorter's two volumes, *The Brontës in Life and Letters*) but she had always been dutiful, and it must have been galling to her to find her intelligence ignored. 'I am miserable', she writes in the following January, 'when I allow myself to dwell on the necessity of spending my life as a governess. The chief requisite for that station seems to me to be the power of taking things easily as they come, and of making oneself comfortable and at home wherever we may chance to be—qualities in which all our family are singularly deficient.'

of the willow and the oak ; I bent quietly, and now, I trust the storm is blowing over me. Mrs Sidgwick is generally considered an agreeable woman ; so she is, I doubt not, in general society. Her health is sound, her animal spirits good ; consequently she is cheerful in company, but oh ! does this compensate for the absence of every fine feeling—of every gentle and delicate sentiment? She behaves somewhat more civilly to me now than she did at first, and the children are a little more manageable ; but she does not know my character, and she does not wish to know it. I have never had five minutes conversation with her since I came, except while she was scolding me. I have no wish to be pitied, except by yourself ; if I were talking to you I could tell you much more.

*Governess Turned Pupil—Once, However,
Peu Correcte*

CHARLOTTE BRONTË TO ELLEN NUSSEY

Brussels, May, 1842

I was twenty-six years old a week or two since, and at this ripe time of life I am a school-girl, a complete school-girl,¹ and, on the whole, very happy in that capacity. It felt very strange at first to submit to authority instead of exercising it—to obey orders instead of giving them but I like that state of things. I return to it with the same avidity that a cow, that has long been kept on dry hay, returns to fresh grass. Don't laugh at my simile. It is very natural to me to submit, and very unnatural to command.

This is a large school, in which there are about forty *externes* or day-pupils, and twelve *pensionnaires* or boarders. Madame H  ger, the head, is a lady of precisely the same cast of mind, degree of cultivation, and quality of intellect as Miss Catherine Wooler.² I think the severe

¹ Charlotte and Emily were improving their French as qualification for their opening a school. Their experiences are reflected in Charlotte's *Villette* and *The Professor*. H  ger's intellectuality was an agreeable stimulus to Charlotte, while Madame proved a spying creature, who came to dislike her. Charlotte emerged, as is proved by Shorter, with the utmost propriety, and is not to be identified with Lucy Snowe in her novel.

² Charlotte was first pupil and then assistant to her at Roc Head, near Haworth.

points are a little softened, because she has not been disappointed, and consequently soured. In a word, she is a married instead of a maiden lady. There are three teachers in the school—Mademoiselle Blanche, Mademoiselle Sophie, and Mademoiselle Marie. The two first have no particular character. One is an old maid, and the other will be one. Mademoiselle Marie is talented and original, but of repulsive and arbitrary manners, which have made the whole school, except myself and Emily, her bitter enemies. No less than seven masters attend to teach the different branches of education—French, Drawing, Music, Singing, Writing, Arithmetic, and German. All in the house are Catholics except ourselves, one other girl, and the *gouvernante* of Madame's children, an Englishwoman, in rank something between a lady's-maid and a nursery governess. The difference in country and religion make a broad line of demarcation between us and all the rest. We are completely isolated in the midst of numbers. Yet I think I am never unhappy ; my present life is so delightful, so congenial to my own nature, compared to that of a governess. My time, constantly occupied, passes too rapidly. Hitherto both Emily and I have had good health, and therefore we have been able to work well. There is one individual of whom I have not yet spoken—Monsieur Héger, the husband of Madame. He is professor of rhetoric, a man of power as to mind, but very choleric and irritable in temperament ; a little black being, with a face that varies in expression. Sometimes he borrows the lineaments of an insane tom-cat,¹ sometimes those of a delirious hyena ; occasionally, but very seldom, he discards these perilous attractions and assumes an air not above 100% removed from mild and gentleman-like. He is very angry with me just at present, because I have written a translation which he chose to stigmatize as '*peu correcte*'. He did not tell me so, but wrote the word on the margin of my book, and asked, in brief stern phrase, how it happened that my compositions were always better than my translations? adding that the thing seemed to him inexplicable. The fact is, some weeks ago, in a high-flown humour, he forbade me to use either dictionary or grammar in translating the most difficult English compositions into French. This makes the task rather arduous, and compels me now and then to introduce an English word, which nearly plucks the eyes out of his head when he sees

¹ *Insane tom-cat* : later (1.5.43) she writes to her brother of the kindness of 'the black Swan, M. Héger', and of the dullness of the rest of the school. 'The phlegm that thickens their blood is too gluey to boil.'

it. Emily and he don't draw well together at all. When he is very ferocious with me I cry ; that sets all things straight. Emily works like a horse, and she has had great difficulties to contend with, far greater than I have had. . . .

. . . There are a hundred things which I want to tell you, but I have not time. Brussels is a beautiful city. The Belgians hate the English. Their external morality is more rigid than ours. To lace the stays without a handkerchief on the neck is considered a disgusting piece of indelicacy.

Good Homesickness

CHARLOTTE BRONTË TO HER SISTER EMILY ¹

Brussels, 1 December, 1843

This is Sunday morning. They are at their idolatrous *messe*, and I am here, that is in the *Refectoire*. I should like uncommonly to be in the dining-room at home, or in the kitchen, or in the back-kitchen. I should like even to be cutting up the hash, with the clerk and some register people at the other table, and you standing by, watching that I put enough flour, not too much pepper, and, above all, that I save the best pieces of the leg of mutton for Tiger and Keeper, the first of which personages would be jumping about the dish and carving-knife, and the latter standing like a devouring flame on the kitchen floor. To complete the picture, Tabby blowing the fire, in order to boil the potatoes to a sort of vegetable glue!

How divine are these recollections to me at this moment! Yet I have no thought of coming home just now. I lack real pretext for doing so ; it is true this place is dismal to me, but I cannot go home without a fixed prospect when I get there ; and this prospect must not be a situation—that would be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. You call yourself idle! Absurd, absurd! . . . Is papa well? Are you well? and Tabby?

You ask about Queen Victoria's visit to Brussels. I saw her for an instant flashing through the Rue Royale in a carriage and six, surrounded by soldiers. She was laughing, and talking very gaily. She looked a little, stout, vivacious lady, very plainly dressed, not much

¹ Emily was not with Charlotte in her second stay in Brussels.

dignity or pretension about her. The Belgians liked her very well on the whole. They said she enlivened the sombre court of King Leopold, which is usually as gloomy as a conventicle.

Write to me again soon. Tell me whether papa really wants me very much to come home, and whether you do likewise. I have an idea that I should be of no use there—a sort of aged person upon the parish. I pray, with heart and soul, that all may continue well at Haworth ; above all in our grey, half-inhabited house. God bless the walls thereof! Safety, health, happiness, and prosperity to you, papa, and Tabby. Amen.

‘ Papa Was Greatly Horrified ’

CHARLOTTE BRONTË TO ELLEN NUSSEY

18 June, 1845

... How far is it from Leeds to Sheffield? Can you give me a notion of the cost? Of course, when I come, you will let me enjoy your own company in peace, and not drag me out a-visiting. I have no desire at all to see your medical-clerical curate. I think he must be like most other curates I have seen ; and they *seem* to me a self-seeking, vain, empty race. At this blessed moment we have no less than three of them in Haworth parish, and, God knows, there is not one to mend another. The other day, they all three, accompanied by Mr. Smidt (of whom, by the way, I have grievous things to tell you), dropped, or rather rushed, in unexpectedly to tea. It was Monday (baking-day), and I was hot and tired ; still, if they had behaved quietly and decently, I would have served them out their tea in peace ; but they began glorifying themselves, and abusing Dissenters in such a manner, that my temper lost its balance, and I pronounced a few sentences sharply and rapidly, which struck them all dumb. Papa was greatly horrified also. I don't regret it. .

Briefly . . .

CHARLOTTE BRONTË TO GEORGE HENRY LEWES

January, 1850

I can be on my guard against my enemies, but God deliver me from my friends!

CURRER BELL

Routine and Ambition ¹

THOMAS CARLYLE TO HIS BROTHER, ALEXANDER CARLYLE

19 December, 1821

Within a few days I have set fairly to work, and am proceeding lustily ; not in the whimpering, wavering, feeble, hobbling style I used ; but stoutly as a man cutting rice ² would wish to do. I rise between seven and eight ; if I have got good sleep—well ; if not—well ; I then seize my pen and write till the unfortunate people have cooked me a morsel of lukewarm tea for breakfast ; and afterwards proceed leisurely to Great King Street in the back of the New Town, where I teach a very sparing portion of Mathematics to two young women and one young man—quiet, stupid people, with whom I spend my time till ten. Next comes a Captain of the Sea, one Anderson in George Street, not rude and boisterous like the Element he has been used to, but shrill and smooth-spoken ; who gasps and burrs and repeats Euclid to me till eleven. On returning home I resume the pen and write till after two ; then a walk till three ; then dinner or dozing or walking or reading silly stuff or scribbling it (as now) till five, when I go to hear Peter Swan overhaul his lessons ; and come back after six to write or read or do whatever I incline. This is a laborious life, but such a one as suits me, and I design persisting in it. Nothing in the world gives such scope to discontent as idleness, no matter whether forced or voluntary ; a man had better be darning stockings than doing nothing. It is also profitable as well as happy. I calculate on making a small penny this winter ; of which my need is not small, as things are, and would have been indispensable, if Thrift had not lent me her aid sometimes. The work at which I am writing is *Legendre*,³ the Translation I spoke of. It is a canny job ; I could earn five guineas in the week at it if I were well. I restrict myself to three,—working four hours each day. The evenings I design to devote to original composition, if I could but gather myself. I must do something—or die, whichever I like better. As to the latter, I have *nae wull o't*, as Curly said, at all.

¹ Carlyle was at this time in Edinburgh struggling for a footing as a writer, or even as a tutor.

² Brushwood.

³ A treatise on Geometry, hack translation that Carlyle regretted. He farmed some of it to his younger brother John.

In this systematic division of my time, I find myself greatly impeded by the want of a proper chronometer ; they have no clock in the house; and I often feel the want of one. Is the old watch at home still alive? If so, send it me. Or have you sold her, which were as well? In this case, try if by hook or by crook you can get me any *thing* to measure time with, and send it out by Farris immediately. I care not if it were twin-brother to a potato-plum in appearance, so it will but wag, and tell me how the hour goes. I beg of you to mind this, for you cannot conceive how a I am straitened for the want of the article. . . .

'Ready to Front the World'

THOMAS CARLYLE TO HIS BROTHER, ALEXANDER CARLYLE

Edinburgh, 22 February, 1822

It is surely galling to a young active mind to look forward to such a fate as sometimes overtakes the improvident or unfortunate cultivator of the soil in our days. To become a Dick of the Grange for example! But beyond all doubt you have no such thing to fear ; you are at present discharging a sacred duty ; and you have every reason to look forward to a comfortable termination of it. A hundred or two hundred pounds would stock you a neat, snug little farm if times were better, and none who knows your habits and talents would have the smallest doubt about repayment. Who is to advance me two hundred pence? you ask. Whoever of us has it, I answer ; and till then we are all alike. Circumstances seem to render it conceivable that I, your obliged, and not ungrateful brother, may have such a sum in my own possession, ere a year or two elapse ; and I here make the promise—not rashly, for I have thought of it fifty times—to let you have the use of it, whenever you think fit. This is, to be sure, selling the chickens while the hen is hatching ; and in this light, it looks rather foolish : but you know it is honestly meant ; and the hope it points to is not quite chimerical. And granting that it should utterly evaporate—are you not still a hardy free-minded Scotsman, with habits of diligence and frugality known only to few Scotsmen, ready to front the world whatever way it offers itself—and to gather an honest livelihood, from any point of the compass, where a livelihood is to be found? I say, therefore, fear nothing! You or any one of us, will never be a snool,¹

¹ Sneak.

we have not the blood of snools in our bodies. Nor shall you ever seriously meditate crossing the great Salt Pool to plant yourself in the Yankee-land. That is a miserable fate for any one, at best ; never dream of it. Could you banish yourself from all that is interesting to your mind, forget the history, the glorious institutions, the noble principles of old Scotland, that you might eat a better dinner perhaps (which you care little for), or drink more rum (which you care naught for) as a great purse-y Yankee? Never! my boy—you will never think of it. Scotland has borne us all hitherto ; we are all Scots to the very heart ; and the same bleak but free and independent soil will, I hope, receive us all into its bosom at last.

‘ Shunning the Clamorous Approval ’

THOMAS CARLYLE TO HIS BROTHER, ALEXANDER CARLYLE

Edinburgh, 20 December, 1822

You ask me after Edward Irving ; but I have nothing to say about him, or little, except what you know already. Like another Boanerges he is cleaving the hearts of the Londoners in twain, attending Bible Societies, Presbyterian dinners, Religious conventions of all kinds ; preaching and speculating and acting so as to gain universal notoriety and very general approbation. Long may he enjoy it! There are few men living that deserve it better. He has written to me only once since he went away, and has been a letter in my debt for some time ; I am expecting payment very soon.

That is a kind of life, which, though prized by many, would not by any means suit my perverted tastes. Popularity is sweet in all cases : but if I were aiming for it in the Pulpit, the idea that a thousand drivellers had gained it more lavishly, that even John Whitfield used to rouse the Londoners from their warm beds, and make them stand in rows, with lanterns in their hands, crowding the streets that led to his chapel, early in raw wet November mornings—would come withering over my imagination like the mortifying wind of Africa, and as Thomas Bell said in his old metaphorical way, would ‘ dash the *cup* of fame from my brow ’. It is happier for me therefore that I live in still shades—shunning the clamorous approval of the many-headed monster as well as avoiding its censure, and determined if ever I be marked out never so slightly from the common herd, to be so by another set of judges. After all it is a blessing little worth coveting ;

the best and richest part of the most famous man's renown is the esteem he is held in by those who see him daily in his goings out and comings in, by his friends and relations and those that love himself more than his qualities ; and this every one of us may gain, without straying into the thorny paths which guide to glory, either in the region of arts or of arms.

' Must the Heart Grow Dull '

THOMAS CARLYLE TO MISS WELSH

August, 1825

Poor miserable sons of Adam! There is a spark of heavenly fire within us, an ethereal glow of Love and Wisdom, for it was the breath of God that made us living souls ; but we are formed of the dust of the ground, and our lot is cast on Earth, and the fire lies hid among the ashes of our fortune, or burns with a fitful twinkle, which Chance, not we, can foster. It makes me sad to think how very small a part we are of what we might be ; how men struggle with the great trade-winds of Life, and are borne below the haven by squalls and currents which they knew not of ; how they toil and strain, and are again deceived ; and how at last tired nature casts away the helm, and leaves her bark to float at random, careless to what unknown rock or shore the gloomy tide may bear it. Will affection also die at last in that inhospitable scene? Will the excellent become to us no better than the common, and the Spirit of the Universe with his thousand voices speak to us in vain? Alas! must the heart itself grow dull and callous, as its hopes one after the other shrink and wither? *' Armseliger Faust, ich kenne dich nicht mehr! '*¹

You perceive my preaching faculty is not a whit diminished, had I opportunity to give it scope. This place in fact is favourable for it.

THOMAS CARLYLE TO HIS WIFE

London, 8 September, 1831

. . . This morning I went for a frank, and half incidentally saw the coronation procession, which seventy or eighty thousand woodenheads

¹ ' O wretched Faust, I know you now no more '—Faust's self-reproach in Gretchen's room.

besides were looking at. It only detained me some five or ten minutes. Mourn not, Goody, that thou wert absent : it was not worth a walk to Stumpy (even without the Gate, which I hope is broken) on a dry day. Quantities of caps and feathers, and *then* at last the royal carriage all made of glass and gilding, more like a huge glass Lantern than anything I ever saw ; and there the poor old King and poor ugly Queen, dimly seen sitting like two foolish wax-dolls (which they were) letting themselves be traile'd, in their lantern go-cart. What took me I know not : but I burst into the heartiest fit of laughter I have had for some time : and perhaps one ought rather to have cried ; for it was the ghost of the Past perhaps taking *final* leave of a world, where as body or as ghost it has now walked for some three thousand years ! Poor King ! they will be consecrating him and *clothing* him even now in that old Abbey ; and what avails it to him or to me or to any man or woman ! *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. And so here I end my History. . . .

Settling In

THOMAS CARLYLE TO HIS BROTHER

Cheyne Row, Chelsea, London,
17 June, 1834

You can fancy what weary lonesome wanderings I had, through the dirty suburbs, and along the burning streets, under a fierce May sun with East wind ; ' seeking through the nation for some habitation ! ' At length Jane sent me comfortable tidings of innumerable difficulties overcome ; and finally (in, I think, the fourth week) arrived herself ; with the furniture all close following her, in one of Pickford's Track-boats.

I carried her to certain of the hopefulest looking Houses I had fallen in with, and a toilsome time we anew had : however, it was not long ; for, on the second inspection, this old Chelsea mansion pleased very decidedly far better than any other we could see ; and, the people also whom it belongs to proving reasonable, we soon struck a bargain, and in three days more (precisely this day week) a Hackney Coach, loaded to the roof and beyond it with luggage and live passengers, tumbled us all down here about eleven in the morning. By ' all ' I mean my Dame and myself ; Bessy Barnett, who had come the night before ;

and—little *Chico*, the Canary-bird, who, *multum jactatus*,¹ did nevertheless arrive living and well from Puttock, and even sang violently all the way by sea or land, nay struck up his *lilt* in the very London streets wherever he could see green leaves and feel the free air. There then we sat on three trunks ; I, however, with a matchbox, soon lit a cigar, as Bessy did a fire ; and thus with a kind of cheerful solemnity we took possession by 'raising reek', and even dined in an *extempore* fashion, on a box-lid covered with some accidental towel. At two o'clock the Pickfords did arrive ; and *then* began the hurly-burly ; which even yet has not grown quieter, will not grow quiet, for a fortnight to come.

However, two rooms and two bedrooms are now in a partially civilised state ; the broken Furniture is mostly mended ; I have my old writing-table again (here) *firm* as Atlas ; a large wainscoted drawing-room (which is to be my study) with the 'red carpet' tightly spread on it ; my Books all safe in Presses ; . . . and so, opposite the middle of my three windows, with little but huge Scotch elm-trees looking in on me, and in the distance an ivied House, and a sunshiny sky bursting out from genial rain, I sit here already very much at home . . .

With the House we are all highly pleased, and, I think, the better, the longer we know it hitherto. I know not if you ever were at Chelsea, especially at Old Chelsea, of which this is a portion. It stretches from Battersea Bridge (a queer old wooden structure, where they charge you a half-penny) along the bank of the River, westward a little way ; and eastward (which is our side) some quarter of a mile, forming a 'Cheyne Walk' (pronounced *Chainie* walk) of really grand old brick mansions, dating perhaps from Charles II's time ('Don Saltero's Coffeehouse' of the *Tatler* is still fresh and brisk among them), with flagged pavement ; carriageway between two rows of stubborn-looking high old pollarded trees ; and then the River with its varied small craft, fast-moving or safe-moored, and the wholesome smell (among the breezes) of sea *tar*. . . .

Frontwards we have the outlook I have described already (or if we shove out our head, the River is disclosed some hundred paces to the left) ; backwards, from the ground floor, our own gardenkin (which I with new garden-tools am actually re-trimming every morning), and, from all the other floors, nothing but leafy clumps, and green fields, and red high-peaked roofs glimmering through them : a most

¹ 'Much buffeted, storm-tossed.' Probably Carlyle is thinking of *Aeneid*, I. 3.

clear, pleasant prospect, in these fresh westerly airs! Of London nothing visible but Westminster Abbey and the topmost dome of St. Paul's ; other faint ghosts of spires (one other at least) disclose themselves, as the smoke-cloud shifts ; but I have not yet made out what they are. . . .

The Manuscript

THOMAS CARLYLE TO DR CARLYLE

Cheyne Row, Chelsea, London,
23 March, 1835

My dear Brother—

. . . Mill had borrowed that first Volume of my poor *French Revolution* (pieces of it more than *once*) that he might have it all before him, and write down some observations on it, which I might print as Notes. I was busy meanwhile with Volume Second ; toiling along like a *Nigger*, but with the heart of a free Roman : Indeed, I know not how it was, I had not felt so clear and independent, sure of myself and of my task for many long years. Well, one night about three weeks ago, we sat at tea, and Mill's short rap was heard at the door : Jane rose to welcome him ; but he stood there unresponsive, pale, the very picture of despair ; said, half-articulately gasping, that she must go down and speak to 'Mrs Taylor'. . . . After some considerable additional gasping, I learned from Mill this fact : that my poor Manuscript, all except some four tattered leaves, was *annihilated* ! He had left it out (too carelessly) ; it had been taken for waste-paper : and so five months of as tough labour as I could remember of, were as good as vanished, gone like a whiff of smoke.— There never in my life had come upon me any other *accident* of much moment ; but this I could not but feel to be a sore one. The thing was *lost*, and perhaps worse ; for I had not only forgotten all the structure of it, but the spirit it was written with was past ; only the general impression seemed to remain, and the recollection that I was on the whole well satisfied with that, and could now hardly hope to equal it. Mill, whom I had to comfort and speak peace to, remained injudiciously enough till almost midnight, and my poor Dame and I had to sit talking of indifferent matters ; and could not till then get our lament freely uttered. *She* was very good to me ; and the thing did not beat us. I felt in general that I was as a little Schoolboy, who had laboriously written out his *Copy* as he could, and was showing it not without satisfaction to the Master : but lo ! the

Master had suddenly torn it, saying : ' No, boy, thou must go and write it *better*.' What could I do but sorrowing go and try to obey. That night was a hard one ; something from time to time tying me tight as it were all round the region of the heart, and strange dreams haunting me : however, I was not without good thoughts too, that came like healing life into me ; and I got it somewhat reasonably crushed down, not abolished, yet subjected to me with the resolution and prophecy of abolishing. Next morning accordingly I wrote to Fraser (who had *advertised* the Book as ' preparing for publication ') that it was all gone back ; that he must not *speak of it* to any one (till it was made good again) ; . . . and so, having first finished out the Piece I was actually upon, I began *again* at the beginning. Early the day after tomorrow (after a hard and quite novel kind of battle) I count on having the First Chapter on paper a second time, no worse than it was, though considerably different. The bitterness of the business is past therefore ; and you must conceive me toiling along in that new way for many weeks to come. . . .

Much Ado

JANE WELSH CARLYLE TO MRS WELSH

Chelsea, 5 September, 1836

My dear Aunt,

Now that I am fairly settled at home again, and can look back over my late travels with the coolness of a spectator, it seems to me that I must have tired out all men, women and children that have had to do with me by the road. The proverb says ' there is much ado when cadgers ride '. I do not know precisely what ' cadger ' means, but I imagine it to be a character like me, liable to head-ache, to sea-sickness, to all the infirmities ' that flesh is heir to ', and a few others besides ; the friends and relations of cadgers should therefore use all soft persuasions to induce them to remain at home.¹

I got into that Mail the other night with as much repugnance and trepidation as if it had been a Phalaris' brazen bull, instead of a Christian vehicle, invented for purposes of mercy—not of cruelty. There

¹ Carlyle's wife has an odd notion of the word. Its etymology is doubtful; originally applied perhaps to vendors of caged-birds, it came to mean a travelling huckster or pedlar.

were three besides myself when we started, but two dropped off at the end of the first stage, and the rest of the way I had, as usual, half of the coach to myself. My fellow-passenger had that highest of all terrestrial qualities, which for me a fellow-passenger can possess—he was silent. I think his name was Roscoe, and he read sundry long papers to himself, with the pondering air of a lawyer.

We breakfasted at Lichfield, at five in the morning, on muddy coffee and scorched toast, which made me once more lyrically recognise in my heart (not without a sigh of regret) the very different coffee and toast with which you helped me out of my headache. At two there was another stop of ten minutes, that might be employed in lunching or otherwise. Feeling myself more fevered than hungry, I determined on spending the time in combing my hair and washing my face and hands with vinegar. In the midst of this solacing operation I heard what seemed to be the Mail running its rapid course, and quick as lightning it flashed on me, 'There it goes! and my luggage is on the top of it, and my purse is in the pocket of it, and here am I stranded on an unknown beach, without so much as a sixpence in my pocket to pay for the vinegar I have already consumed!' Without my bonnet, my hair hanging down my back, my face half dried, and the towel, with which I was drying it, firm grasped in my hand, I dashed out—along, down, opening wrong doors, stumbling over steps, cursing the day I was born, still more the day on which I took a notion to travel, and arrived finally at the bar of the Inn, in a state of excitement bordering on lunacy. The barmaids looked at me 'with wonder and amazement'. 'Is the coach gone?' I gasped out. 'The coach? Yes!' 'Oh! and you have let it away without me! Oh! stop it, cannot you stop it?' and out I rushed into the street, with streaming hair and streaming towel, and almost brained myself against—the Mail! which was standing there in all stillness, without so much as a horse in it! What I had heard was a heavy coach. And now, having descended like a maniac, I ascended again like a fool, and dried the other half of my face, and put on my bonnet, and came back 'a sadder and a wiser' woman.

I did not find my husband at the 'Swan with Two Necks'; for we were a quarter of an hour before the appointed time. So I had my luggage put on the backs of two porters, and walked on to Cheapside, where I presently found a Chelsea omnibus. By and by, however, the omnibus stopped, and amid cries of 'No room, sir,' 'Can't get in,' Carlyle's face, beautifully set off by a broad-brimmed white hat,

gazed in at the door, like the Peri, who, 'at the Gate of Heaven, stood disconsolate'. In hurrying along the Strand, pretty sure of being too late, amidst all the imaginable and unimaginable phenomena which the immense thoroughfare of a street presents, his eye (Heaven bless the mark!) had lighted on my trunk perched on top of the omnibus, and had recognised it. This seems to me one of the most indubitable proofs of genius which he ever manifested. Happily, a passenger went out a little further on, and then he got in.

My brother-in-law had gone two days before, so my arrival was most well-timed. I found all at home right and tight; my maid seems to have conducted herself quite handsomely in my absence; my best room looked really inviting. A bust of Shelley (a present from Leigh Hunt), and a fine print of Albert Dürer, handsomely framed (also a present) had still further ornamented it during my absence. I also found (for I wish to tell you all my satisfaction) every grate in the house furnished with a supply of coloured clippings, and the holes in the stair-carpet all darned, so that it looks like new. They gave me tea and fried bacon, and staved off my headache as well as might be. They were very kind to me, but, on my life, everybody is kind to me, and to a degree that fills me with admiration. I feel so strong a wish to make you all convinced how very deeply I feel your kindness, and just the more I would say, the less able I am to say anything.

God bless you all. Love to all, from the head of the house down to Johnny.

Beasts in the Back Yard

JANE WELSH CARLYLE TO MRS WELSH

5, Cheyne Walk, 23 February, 1842

I am continuing to mend. If I could only get a good sleep, I shall be quite recovered; but, alas! we are gone to the devil again in the sleeping department. That dreadful woman next door, instead of putting away the cock which we so pathetically appealed against, has produced another. The servant has ceased to take charge of them. They are stuffed with ever so many hens into a small hencoop every night, and left out of doors the night long. Of course they are not comfortable, and of course they crow and screech not only from daylight, but from midnight, and so near that it goes through one's head every time like

a sword. The night before last they woke me every quarter of an hour, but I slept some in the intervals ; for they had not succeeded in rousing *him* above. But last night they had him up at three. He went to bed again, and got some sleep after, the ' horrors ' not recommencing their efforts till five ; but I, listening every minute for a new screech that would send him down a second time and prepare such wretchedness for the day, could sleep no more.

What is to be done, God knows ! If this goes on, he will soon be in Bedlam ; and I too, for anything I see to the contrary : and how to hinder it from going on ? The last note we sent the cruel women would not open. I send for the maid and she will not come. I would give them guineas for quiet, but they prefer tormenting us. In the *law* there is no resource in such cases. They may keep wild beasts in their back yard if they choose to do so. Carlyle swears he will shoot them, and orders me to borrow Mazzini's gun. Shoot them with all my heart if the consequences were merely having to go to a police office and pay the damage. But the woman would only be irritated thereby into getting fifty instead of two. If there is to be any shooting, however, I will do it myself. It will sound better my shooting them on principle than his doing it in a passion.

This despicable nuisance is not at all unlikely to drive us out of the house after all, just when he had reconciled himself to stay in it. How one is vexed with little things in this life ! The great evils one triumphs over bravely, but the little eat away one's heart.

The Prime Minister Offers Public Honour

BENJAMIN DISRAELI, FIRST EARL OF BEACONSFIELD, TO THOMAS
CARLYLE

Bournemouth, 27 December, 1874

Sir,

A Government should recognize intellect. It elevates and sustains the tone of a nation. But it is an office which, adequately to fulfil, requires both courage and discrimination, as there is a chance of falling into favouritism and patronizing mediocrity, which, instead of elevating the national feeling, would eventually degrade or debase it. In recommending Her Majesty to fit out an Arctic Expedition, and in suggesting other measures of that class, her Government have shown their sympathy with Science : and they wish that the position of High

Letters should be equally acknowledged : but this is not so easy, because it is in the necessity of things that the test of merit cannot be so precise in literature as in science. When I consider the literary world, I can see only two living names which I would fain believe will be remembered, and they stand out in uncontested superiority. One is that of a poet—if not a great poet, a real one : the other is your own.

I have advised the Queen to offer to confer a baronetcy on Mr Tennyson, and the same distinction should be at your command if you liked it : but I have remembered that, like myself, you are childless, and may not care for hereditary honours. I have therefore, made up my mind, if agreeable to yourself, to recommend to Her Majesty to confer on you the highest distinction for merit at her command, and which, I believe, has never yet been conferred by her except for direct services to the State, and that is the Grand Cross of the Bath.

I will speak with frankness on another point. It is not well that in the sunset of your life you should be disturbed by common cares. I see no reason why a great author should not receive from the nation a pension, as well as a lawyer or statesman. Unfortunately, the personal power of Her Majesty in this respect is limited : but still it is in the Queen's capacity to settle on an individual an amount equal to a good fellowship : and which was cheerfully accepted and enjoyed by the great spirit of Johnson and the pure integrity of Southey.

Have the goodness to let me know your feelings on these subjects.

(His Answer to the Letter Immediately Preceding)

THOMAS CARLYLE TO LORD BEACONSFIELD

5 Cheyne Row, Chelsea,
29 December, 1874

Sir,

Yesterday, to my great surprise, I had the honour to receive your letter containing a magnificent proposal for my benefit, which will be memorable to me for the rest of my life. Allow me to say that the letter, both in purport and expression, is worthy to be called magnanimous and noble, that it is without example in my own poor history ; and I think it is unexampled, too, in the history of governing persons towards men of letters at the present, or at any time ; and that I will carefully preserve it as one of the things precious to memory and heart. A real treasure or benefit *it*, independent of all results from it.

This said to yourself and repositied with many feelings in my own grateful mind, I have only to add that your splendid and generous proposals for my practical behoof, must not any of them take effect ; that titles of honour are, in all degrees of them, out of keeping with the tenour of my own poor existence hitherto in this epoch of the world, and would be an encumbrance, not a furtherance to me ; that as to money, it has, after long years of rigorous and frugal, but also (thank God, and those that are gone before me) not degrading poverty, become in this latter time amply abundant, even superabundant ; more of it, too, now a hindrance, not a help to me ; so that royal or other bounty would be more than thrown away in my case ; and in brief, that except the feeling of your fine and noble conduct on this occasion, which is a real and permanent possession, there cannot anything be done that would not now be a sorrow rather than a pleasure.

*Pleasure in Mutton and Things not Wholly
Understood*

EDWARD FITZGERALD TO W. B. DONNE

7, Southampton Row, 19 November, 1833

... Last night I went to hear a man lecture . . . about Vegetable Diet : but it was only the termination of a former lecture, so that I suppose all the good arguments (if there were any) were gone before. Do you know anything of a book by a Doctor Lamb upon this subject? I do not feel it to be disgusting to talk of myself upon this subject, because I think there is great interest in the subject itself. So I shall say that I am just now very well : in fine spirits. I have only eaten meat once for many weeks : and that was at a party where I did not like to be singled out. Neither have I tasted wine, except two or three times. If I fail at last I shall think it a very great bore : but assuredly the first cut of a leg of mutton will be some consolation for my wounded judgement : that first cut is a fine thing. . . . Spedding¹ and I went to see Macready in *Hamlet* the other night : with which he was pretty well content, but not wholly. For my part, I have given up deciding on how *Hamlet* should be played : or rather have decided it shouldn't

¹ James Spedding, civil servant, and learned editor of Bacon (cf. p. 187).

be played at all. I take pleasure in reading things I don't wholly understand ; just as the old women like sermons : I think it is of a piece with an admiration of all Nature around us. I think there is a greater charm in the half meanings and glimpses of meaning that come in through Blake's wilder visions : though his difficulties arose from a very different source from Shakespeare's. But somewhat too much of this. I suspect I have found out this as a useful solution, when I am asked the meaning of any thing that I am admiring, and don't know it.

Believe me, dear Donne, to be ever your affect. friend,

E. FITZGERALD

Such Stuff as Dreams

EDWARD FITZGERALD TO JOHN ALLEN

Wherstead, 4 July, 1835

My brother John's wife, always delicate, has had an attack this year which she can never get over : and while we are all living in this house cheerfully, she lives in separate rooms, can scarcely speak to us, or see us : and bears upon her cheek the marks of death. She has shewn great Christian dignity all through her sickness : was the only cheerful person when they supposed she could not live : and is now very composed and happy. You say sometimes how like things are to dreams : or, as I think, to the shifting scenes of a play. So does this place seem to me. All our family, except my mother, are collected here : all my brothers and sisters, with their wives, husbands, and children : sitting at different occupations, or wandering about the grounds and gardens, discoursing each their separate concerns, but all united into one whole. The weather is delightful : and when I see them passing to and fro, and hear their voices, it is like scenes of a play. . . .

The Sails of the Mind

EDWARD FITZGERALD TO BERNARD BARTON ¹

London, April, 1838

. . . I am very heavy indeed with a kind of Influenza, which has blocked up most of my senses, and put a wet blanket over my brains.

¹ I.e. Lamb's Quaker Barton (cf. p. 148). Fitzgerald married his daughter.

This state of head has not been improved by trying to get through a new book much in fashion—Carlyle's *French Revolution*—written in a German style. An Englishman writes of French Revolutions in a German style. People say the book is very deep : but it appears to me that the meaning *seems* deep from lying under mystical language. There is no repose, nor equable movement in it : all cut up into short sentences half reflective, half narrative ; so that one labours through it as vessels do through what is called a short sea—small, contrary going waves caused by shallows, and straits, and meeting tides &c. I like to sail before the wind over the surface of an even-rolling eloquence, like that of Bacon or the Opium Eater. There is also pleasant fresh water sailing with such writers as Addison ; is there any *pond*-sailing in literature? that is, drowsy, slow, and of small compass? Perhaps we may say, some Sermons. But this is only conjecture. Certainly Jeremy Taylor rolls along as majestically as any of them. We have had Alfred Tennyson here ; very droll, and very wayward : and much sitting up of nights till two and three in the morning with pipes in our mouths : at which good hour we would get Alfred to give us some of his magic music, which he does between growling and smoking ; and so to bed. All this has not cured my Influenza as you may imagine : but these hours shall be remembered long after the Influenza is forgotten. . . .

Now I must finish my letter : and a very stupid one it is. Here is a sentence of Warburton's¹ that, I think, is very wittily expressed : though why I put it in here is not very discoverable. 'The Church, like the Ark of Noah, is worth saving : not for the sake of the unclean beasts that almost filled it, and probably made most noise and clamour in it, but for the little corner of rationality, that was as much distressed by the stink within, as by the tempest without.' Is it not good? It is out of his letters : and the best thing in them. It is also the best thing in mine.

¹ Bishop of Gloucester (1759), friend and editor of Pope and a Shakespearean scholar.

The Forehead

EDWARD FITZGERALD TO FREDERIC TENNYSON

London, 16 January, 1841

. . . That portrait of Spedding which Laurence has given me : not swords, nor cannon, nor all the Bulls of Bashan butting at it, could, I feel sure, discompose that venerable forehead. No wonder that no hair can grow at such an altitude : no wonder his view of Bacon's virtue is so rarefied that the common consciences of men cannot endure it. Thackeray and I occasionally amuse ourselves with the idea of Spedding's forehead : we find it somehow or other in all things, just peering out of all things : you see it in a milestone, Thackeray says. He also draws the forehead rising with a sober light over Mont Blanc, and reflected in the lake of Geneva. We have great laughing over this. The forehead is at present in Pembrokeshire, I believe : or Glamorganshire : or Monmouthshire : it is hard to say which. It has gone to spend its Christmas there. . . .

Influential Wigs

EDWARD FITZGERALD TO FREDERIC TENNYSON

31 March, 1842

. . . Concerning the bagwigs of composers. Handel's was not a bagwig, which was simply so named from the little stuffed black silk watch-pocket that hung down behind the back of the wearer. Such were Haydn's and Mozart's—much less influential on the character : much less ostentatious in themselves : not towering so high, nor rolling down in following curls so low as to overlay the nature of the brain within. But Handel wore the Sir Godfrey Kneller wig : greatest of wigs : one of which some great General of the day used to take off his head after the fatigue of the battle and hand over to his valet to have the bullets combed out of it. Such a wig was a fugue in itself. . . .

Roofs and Chimneys—and 'Pellets of Fresh Water'

EDWARD FITZGERALD TO BERNARD BARTON

19 Charlotte Street, 11 April, 1844

... I smoked a pipe with Carlyle yesterday. We ascended from his dining room carrying pipes and tobacco up through two stories of his house, and got into a little dressing room near the roof: there we sat down: the window was open and looked out on nursery gardens, their almond trees in blossom, and beyond, bare walls of houses, and over these, roofs and chimneys, and roofs and chimneys, and here and there a steeple, and whole London crowned with darkness gathering behind like the illimitable resources of a dream. I tried to persuade him to leave the accursed den, and he wished—but—but—perhaps he *didn't* wish on the whole. . . .

A cloud comes over Charlotte Street and seems as if it were sailing softly on the April wind to fall in a blessed shower upon the lilac buds and thirsty anemones somewhere in Essex; or, who knows? perhaps at Boulge. Out will run Mrs. Faiers, and with red arms and face of woe haul in the struggling windows of the cottage, and make all tight. Beauty Bob will cast a bird's eye out at the shower, and bless the useful wet. Mr. Loder will observe to the farmer for whom he is doing up a dozen of Queen's Heads that it will be of great use: and the farmer will agree that his young barleys wanted it much. The German Ocean will dimple with innumerable pin points, and porpoises rolling near the surface sneeze with unusual pellets of fresh water—

*Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer cloud,
Without our special wonder?*

Oh this wonderful wonderful world, and we who stand in the middle of it are all in a maze, except poor Matthews of Bedford, who fixes his eyes upon a wooden Cross and has no misgiving whatsoever. When I was at his chapel on Good Friday, he called at the end of his grand sermon on some of the people to say merely this, that they believed Christ had redeemed them: and first one got up and in sobs declared she believed it: and then another, and then another—I was quite overset:—all poor people: how much richer than all who fill the London Churches. Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven!

This is a sad farrago. Farewell.

‘ *Serious Men* ’—and *Promises of Delight*

EDWARD FITZGERALD TO FREDERIC TENNYSON

24 May, 1844

... My dear Frederic, you must select some of your poems and publish them : we want some bits of strong genuine imagination to help put to flight these—etc. Publish a book of fragments, if nothing else but single lines, or else the whole poems. When will you come to England and do it? I dare say I should have stayed longer in London had you been there : but the wits were too much for me. Not Spedding mind : who is a dear fellow. But one finds few in London *serious* men : I mean *serious* even in fun : with a true purpose and character whatsoever it may be. London melts away all individuality into a common lump of cleverness. I am amazed at the humour and worth and noble feeling in the country, however much railroads have mixed us up with metropolitan civilisation. I can still find the heart of England beating healthily down here though no one will believe it.

You know my way of life so well that I need not describe it to you, as it has undergone no change since I saw you. I read of mornings ; the same old books over and over again, having no command of new ones : walk with my great black dog of an afternoon, and at evening sit with open windows, up to which China roses climb, with my pipe, while the blackbirds and thrushes begin to rustle bedwards in the garden, and the nightingale to have the neighbourhood to herself. We have had such a spring (bating the last ten days) as would have satisfied even you with warmth. And such verdure! white clouds moving over the new-fledged tops of oak trees, and acres of grass striving with buttercups. How old to tell of, how new to see! I believe that Leslie's *Life of Constable* (a very charming book) has given me a fresh love of Spring. Constable loved it above all seasons :¹ he hated Autumn. When Sir G. Beaumont who was of the old classical taste asked him if he did not find it difficult to place *his brown tree* in his pictures, ‘ Not at all,’ said C., ‘ I never put one in at all.’ And when Sir George was crying up the tone of the old masters’ landscapes and quoting an *old*

¹ *Constable loved it* : this is borne out by a beautiful passage from a letter to his wife (Bergholt, May, 1819). ‘ Everything seems full of blossom of some kind, and at every step I take, and on whatever object I turn my eyes, that sublime expression of the Scriptures, “ I am the resurrection and the life ”, seems as if uttered near me.’

violin as the proper tone of colour for a picture, Constable got up, took an old Cremona, and laid it down on the sunshiny grass. You would like the book. In defiance of all this, I have hung my room with pictures, like very old fiddles indeed : but I agree with Sir George and Constable both. I like pictures that are not like nature. I can have nature better than any picture by looking out of my window. Yet I respect the man who tries to paint up to the freshness of earth and sky. Constable did not wholly achieve what he tried at : and perhaps the old masters chose a soberer scale of things as more within the compass of lead paint. To paint dew with lead!

I also plunge away at my old Handel of nights, and delight in the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, full of pomp and fancy. What a pity Handel could not have written music to some great Masque, such as Ben Jonson or Milton would have written, if they had known of such a musician to write for.

‘ *In Plain and Simple Manner* ’

WILLIAM CLARKE TO THE HON FREDERICK PONSONBY
(Slow Bowler and Secretary to the All England Eleven)

Undated

Sir,

In making a few observations to my Brother Cricketers and the rising generation, I don't say that I lay down the only true method ; but from many years' experience I have had (having played from my earliest years, and studied the game in all its various branches), I am able to declare that it will generally be found pretty correct. There are instructions out, such as for keeping your right shoulder up, and your left elbow forward, and your right foot fixed firm on the ground, but so that you can turn round on it like a swivel. I shall pass over these, and place my remarks in as plain and simple manner as possible ; so that they will not only be intelligible to the Peer and the Squire, but also to the Artisan, the Peasant, and my Brother Cricketers ; and if there be some things they don't agree with, there perhaps will be others that will take their attention. At any rate they are given with a good feeling ; and when I am called to that bourn from whence no Cricketer returns, people won't have to say, ‘ what he knew he took with him.’

Laughter and Conscience

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY TO DR JOHN BROWN

13 Young Street, Kensington Sqr.,

11 May, 1848

My dear Sir—The arms and the man ¹ arrived in safety yesterday, and I am glad to know the names of two of the eighty Edinburgh friends who have taken such a kind method of showing their good-will towards me. If you are grati I am gratior. Such tokens of regard and sympathy are very precious to a writer like myself who have some difficulty still in making people understand what you have been good enough to find out in Edinburgh, that under the mask satirical there walks about a sentimental gentleman who means not unkindly to any mortal person. I can see exactly the same expression under the vizard of my little friend in silver, and hope some day to shake the whole octogint by the hand gratos and gratas, and thank them for their friendliness and regard. I think I had best say no more on the subject, lest I should be tempted into some enthusiastic writing of which I am afraid. I assure you these tokens of what I can't help acknowledging as popularity, make me humble as well as grateful, and make me feel an almost awful sense of the responsibility which falls upon a man in such a station. Is it deserved or undeserved?—Who is this that sets up to preach to mankind, and to laugh at many things which men reverence? I hope I may be able to tell the truth always, and to see it aright, according to the eyes which God Almighty gives me. And if, in the exercise of my calling, I get friends, and find encouragement and sympathy, I need not tell you how very much I feel and am thankful for this kind of support. Indeed I can't reply lightly upon this subject or feel otherwise than very grave when people praise me as you do. Wishing you and my Edinburgh friends all health and happiness, believe me, my dear Sir, most faithfully yours,

W. M. THACKERAY

¹ *Arms and the man* refers to the inscription upon a silver inkstand, in likeness of *Punch*, sent by the Edinburgh admirers, who thus quote from the first line of the *Aeneid*, and sign themselves *Grati necnon Gratiae Edinenses*.

Cocksparrow or Archangel

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY TO MRS BROOKFIELD ¹

... I don't know about the Unseen World ; the use of the seen World is the right thing I'm sure!—it is just as much God's world and Creation as the Kingdom of Heaven with all the angels. How will you make yourself most happy in it? how secure at least the greatest amount of happiness compatible with your condition? by despising today and looking up cloudward? Pish! Let us turn God's today to its best use, as well as any other part of the time He gives us. When I am on a cloud a-singing, or a pot a-boiling,—I will do my best, and if you are ill, you can have consolations ; if you have disappointments, you can invent fresh sources of hope and pleasure. I'm glad you saw the Crowes, and that they gave you pleasure ; —and that noble poetry of Alfred's gives you pleasure (I'm happy to say m'am I've said the very same thing in prose that you like—the very same words almost). The bounties of the Father I believe to be countless and inexhaustible for most of us here in life ; Love the greatest. Art (which is an exquisite and admiring sense of nature) the next.—By Jove! I'll admire, if I can, the wing of a Cock-sparrow as much as the pinion of an Archangel ; and adore God the Father of the earth, first ; waiting for the completion of my senses, and the fulfilment of his intentions towards me afterwards, when this scene closes over us. So when Bullar turns up his i to the ceiling, I'll look straight at your dear kind face and thank God for knowing that, my dear ; and though my nose is a broken pitcher,² yet, Lo and behold there's a Well gushing over with kindness in my heart where my dear lady may come and drink. God bless you. . . .

A Beneficent Note

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY TO MRS BROOKFIELD

[1849]

At Procter's was not furiously amusing—the eternal G. bores one. Her parents were of course there, the papa with a suspicious looking

¹ Jane Octavia, a great friend of T. and of Matthew Arnold.

² Lady Dorothy Nevill writes that she ' met also his school companion, Mr. Venables, who, whilst at the Charterhouse, had, in a fight, broken the great novelist's nose ' (*Under Five Reigns*, Ch. VIII).

little order in his button hole, and a *chevalier d'industrie* air, which I can't get over. E. didn't sing, but on the other hand Mrs. — did. She was passionate, she was enthusiastic, she was sublime, she was tender. There was one note that she kept so long, that I protest I had time to think about my affairs, to have a little nap, and to awake much refreshed, while it was going on still. At another time, overcome by almost unutterable tenderness, she piped so low, that it's a wonder one could hear at all. In a word, she was *mirobolante*, the most artless, affected, good-natured, absurd, clever creature possible. When she had crushed G. who stood by the piano hating her, and paying her the most profound compliments—she tripped off on my arm to the cab in waiting. I like that absurd kind creature.

Sincerity

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY TO MRS BROOKFIELD

Paris, 1849

Of course in all families the mother is the one to whom the children cling. We don't talk to them, feel with them, love them, occupy ourselves about them as the female does. We think about our business and pleasures, not theirs. Why do I trouble you with these perplexities? If I mayn't tell you what I feel, what is the use of a friend? That's why I would rather have a sad letter from you, or a short one if you are tired and unwell, than a sham-gay one—and I don't subscribe at all to the doctrine of 'striving to be cheerful'. A quoi bon, convulsive grins and humbugging good-humour? Let us have a reasonable cheerfulness, and melancholy too, if there is occasion for it—and no more hypocrisy in life than need be.

Cambridge Nostalgia

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY TO MRS BROOKFIELD

Cambridge, 1850

... I went then to see my relations, old Dr Thackeray 75 years of age, perfectly healthy, handsome, stupid and happy, and he isn't a bit changed in twenty years, nor is his wife, strange to say. I told him he

looked like my grandfather, his uncle, on which he said, 'Your grandfather was by no means the handsomest of the Thackerays,' and so I suppose he prides himself on his personal beauty. At four, we went to dine with Don Thompson in Hall, where the thing to me most striking was the — if you please, the smell of the dinner, exactly like what I remember aforetime. Savoury odours of youth borne across I don't know what streams and deserts, struggles, passions, poverties, hopes, hopeless loves and useless loves of twenty years! There is a sentiment suddenly worked out of a number of veal and mutton joints, which surprises me just as much as it astonishes you, but the best or worst of being used to the pen is, that one chatters with it as with the tongue to certain persons, and all things blurt out for good or for bad. You know how to take the good parts generously and to forget the bad, dear kind lady. . . .

Then we went to Jenny Lind's concert, for which a gentleman here gave us tickets, and at the end of the first act we agreed to come away. It struck me as atrociously stupid. I was thinking of something else the whole time she was jugulating away, and O! I was so glad to get to the end and have a cigar, and I wanted so to go away with Mr Williams, for I feel entirely out of place in this town. This seems to me to be spoken all in a breath, and has been written without a full stop. Does it not strike you as entirely frantic and queer? Well, I wish I were back. . . .

I am going out to breakfast to see some of the gallant young blades of the University, and tonight, if I last until then, to the Union to hear a debate. What a queer thing it is. I think William is a little disappointed that I have not been made enough a lion of, whereas my timid nature trembles before such honours, and my vanity would be to go through life as a gentleman—as a Major Pendennis—you have hit it. I believe I never do think about my public character, and certainly didn't see the gyps, waiters and undergraduates whispering in hall, as your William did, or thought he did. He was quite happy in some dreary rooms in College, where I should have perished of *ennui*,—thus are we constituted. An old hook-nosed clergyman has just come into the Coffee-room, and is looking over my shoulder I think, and has put a stop to the sentence beginning 'thus are we constituted etc.'

Of Affectation

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY TO MRS BROOKFIELD

Hôtel Bristol, Place Vendôme, Paris,
1850

MADAM :

One is arrived, one is at his ancient lodging of the Hotel Bristol, one has heard the familiar clarions sound at nine hours and a half under the Column, the place is whipped by the rain actually, and only rare umbrellas make themselves to see here and there ; London is grey and brumous, but scarcely more sorrowful than this. For so love I these ~~places~~, it is with the eyes that the sun makes itself on the first day at Paris ; one has suffered, one has been disabused, but one is not blasé to this point that nothing more excites, nothing amuses. The first day of Paris amuses always. Isn't this a perfectly odious and affected style of writing? Wouldn't you be disgusted to have a letter written all like that? Many people are scarcely less affected, though, in composing letters, and translate their thoughts into a pompous unfamiliar language, as necessary and proper for the circumstances of letter-writing.

What Greater than Beef-steak and Claret?

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY TO DR JOHN BROWN

Hôtel des 2 Mondes, Rue d'Antin, Paris,
4 November, 1858

My dear Dr. John—Your kind note has followed me hither. I have many a time thought of you and of writing to you, but it's the old story, work dinner, and *da capo*. I have nothing specially cheerful to say about myself and don't like *The Virginians* half as much as you do. Very good writing, but it ought to have been at its present stage of the story at No. X. I dawdled fatally between V. and X. ; . . . I am old, or I am tired, or some other reason. All remains yet doubtful about my poor mother. She has had more than six weeks bed, but we don't know yet whether the fracture is to join or what is quite the nature of it. Poor dear, it was in returning from coming to see me that some boys ran against her near her own door and occasioned the mishap. She bears it wonderfully ; her health has rather improved, and neither she nor her husband quite know how serious the accident

is. I send no condolements about the departure of your good old Father. He was ready, I suppose, and had his passport made out for his Journey. Next comes our little turn to pack up and depart. To stay is well enough, but shall we be very sorry to go? What more is there in life that we haven't tried? What that we have tried is so very much worth repetition or endurance? I have just come from a beef-steak and potatoes 1 f., a bottle of Claret 5 f., both excellent of their kind, but we can part from them without a very severe pang, and pota that we shall get no greater pleasures than these from this time to the end of our days. What is a greater pleasure? Gratified ambition? accumulation of money? What? Fruition of some sort of desire perhaps; when one is twenty, yes, but at 47 Venus may rise from the sea, and I for one should hardly put on my spectacles to have a look. Here I am snarling away on the old poco curante theme. How good-natured you are not to be tired of me. . . .

' The Last Rites '

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY TO MRS BROOKFIELD

White Lion, Bristol,
Monday, 1850

I went to Clevedon and saw the last rites performed for poor dear Harry Hallam. I went from here, and waited at Candy's till the time of the funeral, in such cold weather! Candy's shop was full of ceaseless customers all the time—there was a little boy buying candles and an old woman with the toothache—and at last the moment drew nigh, and Tinling in a scarf and hat-band driving himself down from the Court, passed the shop, and I went down to the church. It looked very tranquil and well ordained, and I had half an hour there before the procession came in view. Those ceremonies over a corpse—the immortal soul of a man being in the keeping of God, and beyond the reach of all undertakers,—always appear to me shocking rather than solemn,—and the horses and plumes give me pain. . . .

Now it is to comfort and help the weak-hearted, and so may your comforter and helper raise you up when you fall. I wonder whether what I said to you yesterday was true? I know what I think about the famous chapter of St. Paul that we heard today,—one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, and one flesh of birds and one of fish and

so forth,—premature definitions—yearnings and strivings of a great heart after the truth. Ah me—when shall we reach the truth? How can we with imperfect organs? but we can get nearer and nearer, or at least eliminate falsehood.

‘*Blighted*’

CHARLES DICKENS TO T. J. THOMPSON

1 Devonshire Terrace,
[1840]

My dear Thompson— . . . Maclise and I are raving with love for the Queen with a hopeless passion whose extent no tongue can tell, nor mind of man conceive. On Tuesday we sallied down to Windsor, prowled about the Castle, saw the corridor and their private rooms, Nay, the very bedchamber (which we know from having been there twice), lighted up with such a ruddy, homely, brilliant glow, bespeaking so much bliss and happiness, that I, your humble servant, lay down in the mud at the top of the Long Walk and refused all comfort—to the immeasurable astonishment of a few straggling passengers who had survived the drunkenness of the previous night. After perpetrating sundry other extravagances, we returned home at midnight in a post-chaise, and now we wear marriage medals next our hearts and go about with pockets full of portraits, which we weep over in secret. Forster was with us at Windsor, and (for the joke’s sake), counterfeits a passion too, BUT HE DOES NOT LOVE HER.

Don’t mention this unhappy attachment. I am very wretched, and think of leaving my home. My wife makes me miserable, and when I hear the voices of my infant children, I burst into tears. I fear it is too late to ask you to take this house, now that you have made such arrangements of comfort in Pall Mall; but if you will, you shall have it very cheap—furniture at a low valuation—money not being so much an object as escaping from the family. For God’s sake turn this matter over in your mind, and please to ask Captain Kincaide what he asks—his lowest terms, in short, for ready money—for that post of Gentleman-at-Arms. I must be near her, and I see no better way than that—for the present.

I have on hand three numbers of *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, and the two first chapters of *Barnaby*. Would you like to buy them?

Writing any more in my present state of mind is out of the question. They are written in a pretty fair hand, and when I am in the Serpentine may be considered curious. Name your own terms.

I know you don't like trouble, but I have ventured, notwithstanding, to make you an executor of my will. There won't be a great deal to do, as there is no money. There is a little bequest having reference to HER which you might like to execute. I have heard on the Lord Chamberlain's authority that she reads my books and is very fond of them. I think she will be sorry when I am gone. I should wish to be embalmed, and to be kept (if practicable), on the top of the Triumphal Arch at Buckingham Palace when she is in town, and on the north-east turrets of the Round Tower when she is at Windsor. . . .

From your distracted and blighted friend,

C. D.

In Rebuke of Cant

CHARLES DICKENS TO A MR DAVID DICKSON

1 Devonshire Terrace,

10 May, 1843

Sir, Permit me to say, in reply to your letter, that you do not understand the intention (I daresay the fault is mine) of the passage in the *Pickwick Papers* which has given you offence. The design of the *Shepherd* and of this and every other allusion to him is to show how sacred things are degraded, vulgarized, and rendered absurd when persons who are utterly incompetent to teach the commonest things take upon themselves to expound such mysteries, and how, in making mere cant phrases of divine words, these persons miss the spirit in which they had their origin. I have seen a great deal of this sort of thing in many parts of England, and I never knew it lead to charity or good deeds.

Whether the great Creator of the world and the creature of his hands, moulded in his own image, be quite so opposite in character as you believe, is a question which it would profit us little to discuss. I like the frankness and candour of your letter, and thank you for it. That every man who seeks heaven must be born again, in good thoughts of his Maker, I sincerely believe. That it is expedient for every hound to say so in a certain snuffing form of words, to which he attaches no

good meaning, I do not believe. I take it there is no difference between us.

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS TO MESSRS FORSTER, MACLISE, AND STANFIELD

(He was invited out to dinner after the birth of his fifth child)

Devonshire Lodge, 17 January, 1844

Fellow Countrymen,

The appeal with which you have honoured me, awakens within my breast emotions that are more easily to be imagined than described. Heaven bless you. I shall indeed be proud, my friends, to respond to such a requisition. I had withdrawn from Public Life—I fondly thought forever—to pass the evening of my days in hydropathical pursuits, and the contemplation of virtue. For which latter purpose, I had bought a looking-glass. But, my friends, private feeling must ever yield to a stern sense of public duty. The Man is lost in the Invited Guest, and I comply. Nurses, wet and dry ; apothecaries ; mothers-in-law ; babbies ; with all the sweet (and chaste) delights of private life ; these, my countrymen, are hard to leave. But you have called me forth, and I will come. Fellow Countrymen, your friend and faithful servant.

CHARLES DICKENS TO HIS YOUNGEST CHILD ON HIS LEAVING FOR AUSTRALIA

September, 1868

I write this note today because your going away is much upon my mind, and because I want you to have a few parting words from me, to think of now and then at quiet times. I need not tell you that I love you dearly, and am very, very sorry in my heart to part with you. But this life is half made up of partings, and these pains must be borne. It is my comfort and sincere conviction that you are going to try the life for which you are best fitted. I think its freedom and wildness more suited to you than any experiment in a study or office would have been ; and without that training, you could have followed no other suitable occupation.

What you have always wanted until now, has been a set, steady,

constant purpose. I therefore exhort you to persevere in a thorough determination to do whatever you have to do as well as you can do it. I was not so old as you are now when I first had to win my food, and to do it out of this determination, and I have never slackened in it since.

Never take a mean advantage of any one in any transaction, and never be hard upon people who are in your power. Try to do to others as you would have them do to you, and do not be discouraged if they fail sometimes. It is much better for you that they should fail in obeying the greatest rule laid down by Our Saviour, than that you should.

I put a New Testament among your books, for the very same reasons, and with the very same hopes, that made me write an easy account of it for you, when you were a little child ; because it is the best book that ever was or will be known in the world, and because it teaches you the best lessons by which any human creature who tries to be truthful and faithful to duty can possibly be guided. As your brothers have gone away, one by one, I have written to each such words as I am now writing to you, and have entreated them all to guide themselves by this Book, putting aside the interpretations and inventions of men.

You will remember that you have never at home been wearied about religious observances or mere formalities. I have always been anxious not to weary my children with such things before they are old enough to form opinions respecting them. You will therefore understand the better that I now most solemnly impress upon you the truth and beauty of the Christian Religion, as it came from Christ himself, and the impossibility of your going far wrong if you humbly but heartily respect it.

Only one thing more on this head. The more we are in earnest as to feeling it, the less we are disposed to hold forth about it. Never abandon the wholesome practice of saying your own private prayers, night and morning. I have never abandoned it myself, and I know the comfort of it.

I hope you will always be able to say in after life, that you had a kind father. You cannot show your affection for him so well, or make him so happy, as by doing your duty.

Your affectionate
Father

*Chatham Folk of a Hundred Years Ago, in the Eyes of
their Scottish Doctor*

DR JOHN BROWN TO HIS BROTHER WILLIAM

Chatham, 26 October, 1831

... I have not examined either the dockyard or the fortifications, both of which are full of interest. The castle is a fine old baronial-looking building. The Cathedral is near it and very neat but paltry. The river is very broad and smooth, and in a fine clear day looks quite foreign with its broad shallow barges with dark red heavy Lateen sails, hanging on the wind, and the old Dutch-looking wooden houses standing in the water, with their sharp gables and projecting storeys with neat lattice windows. Then there is the odd dress of the sailors, with bright yellow worsted spencers and large slouched hats; and the long strings of donkeys carrying neat little bags of white sand of the size and shape of Bologna sausages (these are brought from Brompton and are used for *sanding* the floors), winding through the narrow streets, with 2 or 3 boys in their pure white or yellow frocks, are very pretty. But amidst all this outside neatness and cleanliness the people are very inferior to our peasantry in intellect. They are more perfect animals, keep their bodies cleaner, think more about their eating and drinking and their little comforts than we do, but this is nearly all. There is also a want of that deep enduring affection among relations. I have never seen anything like it. If a daughter or son continues *long* ill (they are very attentive for a day or two) they get tired and almost wish him out of the way. About a week ago I went 9 miles to see a young lady who had brain fever; on going into the house and asking how she did—it was near 11 o'clock—I was told the nurse had said she was rather better. Her father had not *seen* her that morning and her mother was away on a visit, and she was left *entirely* to the care of 2 nurses. This is a specimen of the kind of *affection*. They are all very polite, but the death of a friend makes a very transient impression; in fact, it is not uncommon to go in, and being ushered into the dining-room, to find the *whole* family enjoying a comfortable dinner, with a nice pudding and some stewed apples, and on asking how their father is you hear he died that morning! . . .

The Young Doctor and the Great Transaction

DR JOHN BROWN TO HIS BROTHER WILLIAM

(Edinburgh,) *Sabbath night* (1839)

. . . Alexander Brown is very much worse : I don't know if he will live out the month. I sat a long time with him today in his bedroom, looking out upon Warrender Park with its sheep and sunshine and silence, and its trees quite still, and the great Pentlands beyond in their perpetual beauty. He is very clear in his mind and quite ready for the great Transaction. . . . William, do you know I am beginning to wonder what the meaning of all this is. I have been in the closest contact with the dying life of 3 very good men—Dr. Belfrage and these two, and yet how little have I been bettered by it all!—just relishing the *beau idéal* of the thing, as I did this afternoon these silly sheep on the sunny grass, that's all. May God keep at it in His infinite patience, and not let me go! I have given up now inquiring nicely into the state of my soul, I am so utterly *out* in all my attempts to make out the mystery of myself—wherein I am good, and wherein desperately wicked. . . .

A Glimpse of Turner

LADY TREVELYAN TO DR JOHN BROWN

7 October, 1846

. . . It always seems to me that it is in his boundless prodigality of thought that Turner differs from other painters, and that the more Turneresque he was (up to his culminating point) the more full of meaning every bit of his work became. You never get to the end of a picture of his ; the more you look at it the more you find out. It is not that there is a blue mist and you imagine things in it. You might fancy things in other people's blue mists, when you were in the humour, and the things would not be there next time you looked ; but Turner's things are really there, and once you have seen them there they are for ever, and you know that he meant them, and meant a thousand things more that you have only to watch for and find out. People cannot imitate him in this any more than in his intense refinement of drawing, when he chooses to draw ; of course sometimes he was perfectly care-

less and reckless; and latterly sight and hand were failing. I believe the *Fallacies* were never even printed. Many of his innumerable sketch-books belonging to the nation are closely written over, wherever they are not covered with drawings, with verse and prose. His sketchbooks in France are crammed with drawing and writing, 3 sketches on a page, and more on the other side of the paper. I think you know that there are 18,000 sketches and pictures of those that he left to the Nation. I don't know whether Mr. Ruskin took the trouble to read all the poetry, etc.

I have seen Turner several times, and have been in that wonderful old house,¹ where the old woman with her head wrapped up in dirty flannel used to open the door, and when she vanished at last, another old woman with the same dirty flannel about her head, replaced her, and where on faded walls hardly weather-tight, and among bits of old furniture thick with dust like a place that had been forsaken for years, were those brilliant pictures all glowing with sunshine and colour—glittering lagunes of Venice, foaming English seas and fairy sunsets—all shining out of the dirt and neglect, and standing in rows one behind another as if they were endless, the great *Carthage* at one end of the room and the glorious old *Téméraire* lighting up another corner, and Turner himself careless and kind and queer to look upon, with a certain pathos under his humour, that one could hardly miss. The man and the place were so strange and so touching no one could forget it of all who had ever seen and felt it. . . .

Stomachic Despondency Sublime

TWO CHARACTERISTIC PASSAGES FROM JOHN RUSKIN TO DR
JOHN BROWN

Simpton Inn, 2 September, 1876

. . . Well, next about myself. I'm a good deal shocked at finding how my old limbs fail me, on the rocks they used to love, and I'm greatly vexed to find the high Alpine air more directly provoking bilious headache than ever, so that even where I *can* climb to, I've no

¹ The extraordinary old Turner, weather-beaten like a sea-captain, asked at some Chelsea lodgings the landlady's name. 'Booth.' 'That's my name too,' said he, and he stayed there the rest of his life.

comfort. But I had a wonderful study yesterday of the moraines of the Simplon Glaciers, and of stomachic as distinguished from real despondency ; it is very curious that the stomachic despondency is often intensely *sublime*! giving a wild, lurid, fever-struck grandeur to grand things, which, thank God, to-day I shall see none of, for I put myself on chicken and dry toast, and am all right again for the ravine of Gondo, which I'm just starting to walk down. . . .

' Undintable Caoutchouc '

Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
21 October, 1878

. . . Yes, I was at Hawarden last week (three days of it), but I *cannot* now go into society. People are perpetually trying to discuss things with me of which I know the bottom and all round, and have *told* them the bottom and all round twenty years ago ; and the deadly feeling of the resilience and immortality of the undintable caoutchouc of which most people's heads are made is too much for me.

The Duke of Argyll was there too, and I couldn't say half I wanted to Mr. Gladstone, because one had to be civil to the Ducality (the more as it was in mourning). My refuge was always Mary Gladstone, who is a very ' perfect woman, nobly planned '.¹ Papa and Mamma, and the Duke, and everybody went away on the Tuesday, and left Mary to take care of me all Wednesday, and she did, and I was very sorry to come away. . . .

Souls and Bacon

CHARLES KINGSLEY TO THE REV PETER, WOOD

Eversley, 5 August, 1842

Peter!—Whether in the glaring saloons of Almack's,² or making love in the equestrian stateliness of the park, or the luxurious recumbancy of the ottoman, whether breakfasting at one, or going to bed at three, thou

¹ Cf. Wordsworth's ' She was a phantom of delight '.

² Club in Pall Mall, succeeded by Brooks's.

art still Peter, the beloved of my youth, the staff of my academic days, the regret of my parochial retirement!—Peter! I am alone! Around me are the everlasting hills, and the everlasting bores of the country! My parish is peculiar for nothing but want of houses and abundance of peat bogs; my parishioners remarkable only for aversion to education and a predilection for fat bacon. I am wasting my sweetness on the desert air—I say my sweetness, for I have given up smoking, and smell no more. Oh, Peter, Peter, come down and see me! O that I could behold your head towering above the fir trees that surround my lonely dwelling. Take pity on me! I am ‘like a kitten in the washhouse copper with the lid on!’ And, Peter, prevail on some of your friends here to give me a day’s trout fishing, for my hand is getting out of practice. But Peter, I am, considering the oscillations and perplexing circumgurgitations of this piece-meal world, an improved man. I am much more happy, much more comfortable, reading, thinking, and doing my duty—much more than ever I did before in my life. Therefore I am not discontented with my situation, or regretful that I buried my first-class in a country curacy, like the girl who shut herself up in a bandbox on her wedding night (*vide* Rogers’ *Italy*). And my lamentations are not general (for I do not want an inundation of the froth and tide-wash of Babylon the Great), but particular, being solely excited by want of thee, oh Peter, who art very pleasant to me and wouldst be more so if thou wouldst come and eat my mutton, and drink my wine, and admire my sermons, some Sunday at Eversley.

Your faithful friend,

Boanerges Roar-at-the-Clods.

Monx

FROM EDWARD LEAR TO CHICHESTER FORTESCUE ¹

Corfu, 9 October, 1856

I have just returned from a 2 month’s tour, whereby I have seen and drawn all Mount Athos. . . . It is a peninsular mountain about 2000 ft high & 50 miles long ending in a vast crag, near 7000 feet high, this being Athos. All but this bare crag is one mass of vast forest, beech,

¹ *Chichester Fortescue*, Baron Carlingford (1874) statesman and life-long friend of Lear.

chestnut, oak, & ilex, and all round the cliffs and crags by the sea are 20 great and ancient monistries, not to speak of 6 or 700 little 'uns above and below and around. These convents are inhabited by, altogether perhaps, 6 or 7000 monks, & as you may have heard, no female creature exists in all the peninsula:—there are nothing but mules, tomcats, & cocks allowed. This is literally true.

. . . The worst was the food & the filth, which were uneasy to bear. But however wondrous and picturesque the exterior & interior of the monasteries, & however abundantly & exquisitely glorious & stupendous the scenery of the mountain, I would not go again to the *"Άγιον Όρος"*¹ for any money, so gloomy, so shockingly unnatural, so lonely, so lying, so unattractably odious seems to me all the atmosphere of such monkery. That half of our species which it is natural to every man to cherish & love best, ignored, prohibited and abhorred—all life spent in everlasting repetition of monotonous prayers, no sympathy with one's fellow-beings of any nation, class or age. The name of Christ on every garment and at every tongue's end, but his maxims trodden under foot. God's world and will turned upside down, maimed & caricatured:—if this I say be Christianity let Christianity be rooted out as soon as possible. More pleasing in the sight of the Almighty I really believe, & more like what Jesus Christ intended man to become, is an honest Turk with 6 wives, or a Jew working hard to feed his little old clo' babbies, than these muttering, miserable, mutton-hating, man-avoiding, misogynic, morose, & merriment marring, monotoning, many-mule-making, mocking, mournful, minced-fish & marmalade masticating Monks. Poor old pigs! Yet one or two were kind enough in their way, dirty as they were: but it is not them, it is their system I rail at.

Fit for Potatoes

FROM EDWARD LEAR TO CHICHESTER FORTESCUE

11 October, 1861

. . . I am glad you are enjoying yourself. I ain't. And as for content, that is a loathsome, slimy humbug—fit only for potatoes, very fat hogs,—& fools generally. Let us pray fervently that we may never

¹ The holy mountain, Athos.

become such asses as to be contented. Nevertheless I was sorry my last letter followed you, as I dare say it was disagreeable : which most things are : & myself especially. But did you ever have a beastly bore of a brother-in-law who persecuted you for tin? If not you cannot enter into my feelings just now. . . .

Bye the bye, there is a new spasmodic poet, by name Swinburne who seems to amaze small circles.

The religious world bubbles & frizzes, & it is now said that the Athanasian Creed is to be repeated always before dinner in all Godly houses—& sometimes afterwards also. One of the Hyænas at the Zoological Gardens is dead, & one of the Giraffes has brought forth a puppy, I mean a calf, that is a giraffino. And the Hippopotamice, have, (I regret to say) attempted to reproduce ineffectually more than once. A large & not pleasantly-odorous dead black cat has adorned our door steps for 5 days, but that is not wonderful, only sad. Thomas Woolner the Sculptor has taken a house in Welbeck St. & Palgrave the poet has gone to live with him. The wick of the lamp wanes, & I stop.

‘Screamy Ganders of the Church’

FROM EDWARD LEAR TO LADY WALDEGRAVE

15 March, 1863

Your letter of the 23rd February gave me a great deal of pleasure ; it is delightful to know from yourself that you and Chichester are so happy, though I knew very well that you would be so. The Pig-hearted has an abundance of good qualities, which are not observable even upon long knowledge of his character.

I am glad I was not doomed to hear Mr. J.’s sermon. I begin to be vastly weary of hearing people talk nonsense—unanswered,—not because they are unanswerable, but because they talk in pulpits. That same morning I heard a ‘discourse’ on Lot’s wife and other unpleasant legends, being—as I find in my journal, the 23rd I have heard on the same subject. Are not the priests of the age blind indeed not to discern that, though from the unassailable vantage ground of custom they may oppress the human intellect for a long long while, yet that some day the hour will come for them to go the way of all other priesthoods? . . .

A broader creed,—a better form of worship—the cessation of non-

sense and curses—and the recognition of a new state of matters brought about by centuries, science, destiny or what not—will assuredly be demanded and come to pass whether Bishops and priests welcome the changes or resist them. Not those who believe that God the Creator is greater than a Book, and that millions unborn are to look up to higher thoughts than those stereotyped by ancient legends, gross ignorance, and hideous bigotry—not those are the Infidels,—but these same screamy ganders of the church, who put darkness forward and insist that it is light.

Meanwhile I hear that a measure is to be brought forward in the Legislature, to simplify the creed of religious England, and thus by the shortest catechism to abolish all infidel doctrines. The Bishops of all dioceses are to prevent the clergy from allowing any person to attend church who does not answer 2 simple questions in the affirmative.

1st. Do you believe in Balaam's ass, Jonah's whale, Elisha's bears, and Lot's wife?

2nd. Do you believe that all mankind who do not believe in these creatures will be burned in everlasting fire, wholly without respect to their wisdom, charity or any other good quality? . . .

My life here has gone on very sklombionbiously¹ on the whole—though I go out very little, not being, as you know, of a gregarious nature. . . .

Dry

FROM EDWARD LEAR TO CHICHESTER FORTESCUE

61, Promenade des Anglais, Nice,
24 February, 1865

. . . Concerning the ink of which you complain, this place is so wonderfully dry that nothing can be kept moist. I never was in so dry a place in all my life. When the little children cry, they cry dust and not tears. There is some water in the sea, but not much :—all the

¹ Lear's fun often runs to absurd coinage. Epistolary playfulness is not at all new. For instance, Dr Sheridan writes to Swift: 'Ei Xav not butt reap rhyme and eu for wry tinn sow long an ape is till a bout bees knees' (business!), etc.; and Lord Orrery sends (18.7.1738) to Swift a letter written backwards, to be read from the tail.

Lear ends a letter to Fortescue, on his marriage to Lady Waldegrave, 'Yours absquoxiously and full of blomphious and umpsidixious congratulations.'

wetnurses cease to be so immediately on arriving :—Dryden is the only book read :—the neighbourhood abounds with Dryads and Hammerdryads : and weterinary surgeons are quite unknown. It is a queer place,—Brighton and Belgravia and Baden by the Mediterranean : odious to me in all respects but its magnificent winter climate, and were I possessor of a villa, I could live delightedly : but to have one's only chance of exercise in a crowded promenade of swells—one year is enough of that.

' I Was Not Alone '

EDWARD LEAR TO LADY WALDEGRAVE

Venice, 24 November, 1865

My dear Lady Waldegrave,—I have just seen the Leader in *The Times* of Monday—the 20th. which congratulates Chichester on his becoming Irish Secretary ;—being of an undiplomatic and demonstrative nature in matters that give me pleasure, I threw the paper up into the air and jumped aloft myself—ending by taking a small fried whiting out of the plate before me and waving it round my foolish head triumphantly till the tail came off and the body and head flew bounce over to the other side of the *table d'hôte* room. Then only did I perceive that I was not alone, but that a party was at breakfast in a recess. Happily for me they were not English, and when I made an apology saying I had suddenly seen some good news of a friend of mine—these amiable Italians said—'*Bravissimo Signore ! ci rallegriamo anche noi ! se avessimo anche noi piccoli pesci li butteremmo di quâ e là per la camera in simpatia con voi !*'¹—so we ended by all screaming with laughter.

Lear Transposed

EDWARD LEAR TO LADY WALDEGRAVE

17 October, 1866

My dear Lady Waldegrave,—It is orfle cold here, and I don't know what to do. I think I shall go to Jibberolter, passing through Spain,

¹ 'Hurrah, Sir, we also are delighted. If only we had some little fish, too, we would throw them hither and thither around the room in sympathy with you.'

and doing Portigle later. After all one isn't a potato—to remain always in one place.

A few days ago in a railway as I went to my sister's a gentleman explained to two ladies, (whose children had my *Book of Nonsense*) that thousands of families were grateful to the author (which in silence I agreed to) who was not generally known—but was really Lord Derby : and now came a showing forth, which cleared up at once to my mind why that statement has already appeared in several papers. Edward Earl of Derby (said the Gentleman) did not choose to publish the book openly, but dedicated it as you see to his relations, and now if you will transpose the letters LEAR you will read simply EDWARD EARL.—Says I, joining spontaneous in the conversation—‘That is quite a mistake : I have reason to know that Edward Lear the painter and author wrote and illustrated the whole book.’ ‘And I,’ says the Gentleman, says he—‘have good reason to know Sir, that you are wholly mistaken. *There is no such a person as Edward Lear.*’ ‘But,’ says I, ‘there is—and I am the man—and I wrote the book!’ Whereon all the party burst out laughing and evidently thought me mad or telling fibs. So I took off my hat and showed it all round, with Edward Lear and the address in large letters—also one of my cards, and a marked handkerchief : on which amazement devoured those benighted individuals and I left them to gnash their teeth in trouble and tumult.

Believe me, Dear Lady Waldegrave,

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD LEAR

‘*Wink in your Ink*’

C. L. DODGSON (LEWIS CARROLL) TO MISS GERTRUDE
CHATAWAY

Reading Station, 13 April, 1878

My dear Gertrude,—As I have to wait here for half an hour, I have been studying *Bradshaw* (most things, you know, ought to be studied : even a trunk is studded with nails), and the result is that it seems I could come, any day next week, to Winckfield, so as to arrive there about one ; and that, by leaving Winckfield again about half-past six, I could reach Guildford again for dinner. The next question is, *How far is it from Winckfield to Rotherwick?* Now do not deceive me, you

wretched child! If it is more than a hundred miles, I can't come to see you, and there is no use to talk about it. If it less, the next question is, *How much less?* These are serious questions, and you must be as serious as a judge in answering them. There musn't be a smile in your pen, or a wink in your ink (perhaps you'll say, 'There can't be a *wink* in *ink* : but there may be *ink* in a *wink* '—but this is trifling ; you musn't make jokes like that when I tell you to be serious) while you write to Guildford and answer these two questions. You might as well tell me at the same time whether you are still living at Rotherwick—and whether you are at home—and whether you get my letter—and whether you're still a child, or a grown-up person—and whether you're going to the seaside next summer—and anything else (except the alphabet and the multiplication table) that you happen to know. I send you 10,000,000 kisses, and remain

Your loving friend,

C. L. DODGSON

Ada for Short

C. L. DODGSON (LEWIS CARROLL) TO MISS ADELAIDE PAINE

Christ Church, Oxford, 8 March, 1880

My dear Ada,—(Isn't that your short name? 'Adelaide' is all very well, but you see when one is *dreadfully* busy one hasn't time to write such long words—particularly when it takes one half an hour to remember how to spell it—and even then one has to go and get a dictionary to see if one has spelt it right, and of course the dictionary is in another room, at the top of a high bookcase—where it has been for months and months, and has got all covered with dust—so one has to get a duster first of all, and nearly choke oneself in dusting it—and when one *has* made out at last which is dictionary and which is dust, even *then* there's the job of remembering which end of the alphabet 'A' comes—for one feels pretty certain it isn't in the *middle*—then one has to go and wash one's hands before turning over the leaves—for they've got so thick with dust one hardly knows them by sight—and, as likely as not, the soap is lost, and the jug is empty, and there's no towel, and one has to spend hours and hours in finding things and perhaps after all one has to go off to the shop to buy a new cake of soap—so, with all this bother, I hope you won't mind my writing it short and saying,

'My dear Ada'). You said in your last letter you would like a likeness of me : so here it is, and I hope you will like it—I won't forget to call the next time but one I'm in Wallington.

Your very affectionate friend,

LEWIS CARROLL

Definite Contents

C. L. DODGSON (LEWIS CARROLL)

Chestnuts, Guildford,
15 January, 1886

Yes, my child, if all be well, I shall hope, and you may fear, that the train reaching Hook at two eleven, will contain

Your loving friend,

C. L. DODGSON

Room for Mathematics

C. L. DODGSON (LEWIS CARROLL) TO THE SENIOR CENSOR OF
CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD¹

Dear Senior Censor,—In a desultory conversation on a point connected with the dinner at our high table, you incidentally remarked to me that lobster-sauce, 'though a necessary adjunct to turbot, was not entirely wholesome!'

It is entirely unwholesome. I never ask for it without reluctance : I never take a second spoonful without a feeling of apprehension on the subject of a possible nightmare. This naturally brings me to the subject of Mathematics, and of the accommodation provided by the University for carrying on the calculations necessary in that important branch of Science.

As Members of Convocation are called upon (whether personally, or, as is less exasperating, by letter) to consider the offer of the Clarendon Trustees, as well as every other subject of human, or inhuman, interest, capable of consideration, it has occurred to me to suggest for

¹ This letter was written in burlesque of the Professor of Physics, who had answered an offer from the Clarendon Trustees with an enumeration of the requirements of his department : it was published in *Notes by an Oxford Chiel*, 1874.

your consideration how desirable roofed buildings are for carrying on mathematical calculations : in fact, the variable character of the weather in Oxford renders it highly inexpedient to attempt much occupation, of a sedentary nature, in the open air.

Again, it is often impossible for students to carry on accurate mathematical calculations in close contiguity to one another, owing to their mutual conversation ; consequently these processes require different rooms in which irrepressible conversationalists, who are found to occur in every branch of Society, might be carefully and permanently fixed.

It may be sufficient for the present to enumerate the following requisites—others might be added as funds permit :—

A. A very large room for calculating Greatest Common Measure. To this a small one might be attached for Least Common Multiple : this, however, might be dispensed with.

B. A piece of open ground for keeping Roots and practising their extraction : it would be advisable to keep Square Roots by themselves, as their corners are apt to damage others.

C. A room for reducing Fractions to their Lowest Terms. This should be provided with a cellar for keeping the Lowest Terms when found, which might also be available to the general body of Undergraduates, for the purpose of 'keeping Terms'.

D. A large room, which might be darkened, and fitted up with a magic lantern, for the purpose of exhibiting circulating Decimals in the act of circulation. This might also contain cupboards, fitted with glass doors, for keeping the various Scales of Notation.

E. A narrow strip of ground, railed off and carefully levelled, for investigating the properties of Asymptotes,¹ and testing practically whether Parallel Lines meet or not : for this purpose it should reach, to use the expressive language of Euclid, 'ever so far'.

This last process of 'continually producing the lines', may require centuries or more ; but such a period, though long in the life of an individual, is as nothing in the life of the University.

As Photography is now very much employed in recording human expressions, and might possibly be adapted to Algebraical Expressions, a small photographic room would be desirable, both for general use and for representing the various phenomena of Gravity, Disturbance of

¹ Lines, I gather, which approach ever nearer to some curve, though they would never meet it : tangents at infinite distance.

Equilibrium, Resolution, etc., which affect the features during severe mathematical operations.

May I trust that you will give your immediate attention to this most important subject?

Believe me,
Sincerely yours,

MATHEMATICUS

Adjusting our 'Mental Nerves'

C. L. DODGSON (LEWIS CARROLL) TO MISS ISABEL STANDEN

Eastbourne, 4 August, 1885

I can quite understand, and much sympathise with, what you say of your feeling lonely, and not what you can honestly call 'happy'. Now I am going to give you a bit of philosophy about that—my own experience is, that *every* new form of life we try is, just at first, irksome rather than pleasant. My first day or two at sea is a little depressing; I miss the Christ Church interests, and haven't taken up the threads of interest here; and, just in the same way, my first day or two, when I get back to Christ Church, I miss the seaside pleasures, and feel with unusual clearness, the bothers of business-routine. In all such cases, the true philosophy, I believe, is '*wait a bit*'. Our mental nerves seem to be so adjusted that we feel *first*, and most keenly, the *dis*-comforts of any new form of life; but, after a bit, we get used to them, and cease to notice them; and *then* we have time to realise the enjoyable features, which at first we were too much worried to be conscious of.

Suppose you hurt your arm, and had to wear it in a sling for a month. For the first two or three days the discomfort of the bandage, the pressure of the sling on the neck and shoulder, the being unable to use the arm, would be a constant worry. You would feel as if all comfort in life were gone; after a couple of days you would be used to the new sensations, after a week perhaps wouldn't notice them at all; and life would seem just as comfortable as ever.

So my advice is, don't think about loneliness, or happiness, or unhappiness, for a week or two. Then 'take stock' again, and compare your feelings with what they were two weeks previously. If they have changed, even a little, for the better, you are on the right track; if not,

we may begin to suspect the life does not suit you. But what I want *especially* to urge is that there's no use in comparing one's feelings between one day and the next ; you must allow a reasonable interval for the *direction of change* to show itself. . . .

To His Old Nurse

R. L. STEVENSON

1871?

My dear Cummy,¹—I was greatly pleased by your letter in many ways. Of course, I was glad to hear from you ; you know, you and I have so many old stories between us, that even if there was nothing else, even if there was not a very sincere respect and affection, we should always be glad to pass a nod. I say, 'even if there was not'. But you know right well there is. Do not suppose that I shall ever forget those long, bitter nights, when I coughed and coughed and was so unhappy, and you were so patient and loving with a poor, sick child. Indeed, Cummy, I wish I might become a man worth talking of, if it were only that you should not have thrown away your pains.

Happily, it is not the result of our acts that makes them brave and noble, but the acts themselves and the unselfish love that moved us to do them. 'Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these.' My dear old nurse, and you know there is nothing a man can say nearer his heart except his mother or his wife :—my dear old nurse, God will make good to you all the good that you have done, and mercifully forgive you all the evil. And next time when the spring comes round, and everything is beginning once again, if you should happen to think that you might have had a child of your own, and that it was hard you should have spent so many years taking care of some one else's prodigal, just you think this—you have been for a great deal in my life ; you have made much that there is in me, just as surely as if you had conceived me ; and there are sons who are more ungrateful to their own mothers than I am to you. For I am not ungrateful, my dear Cummy, and it is with a very sincere emotion that I write myself your little boy,

LOUIS

¹ Alison Cunningham.

Blue Sky—and Black Coat

R. L. STEVENSON TO CHARLES BAXTER

Mentone, December, 1873

... My dear Charles, is the sky blue at Mentone? Was that your question? Well, it depends upon what you call blue ; it's a question of taste, I suppose. Is the sky blue? You poor critter, you never saw blue sky worth being called blue in the same day with it. And I should rather fancy that the sun did shine I should. And the moon doesn't shine either. O no! (This last is sarcastic.) Mentone is one of the most beautiful places in the world, and has always had a very warm corner in my heart since I first knew it eleven years ago.

11th December.—I live in the same hotel with Lord X. He has black whiskers, and has been successful in raising some kids ; rather a melancholy success ; they are weedy looking kids in Highland clo'. They have a tutor with them who respires Piety and that kind of humble your-lordship's-most-obedient sort of gentlemanliness that noblemen's tutors have generally. They all get livings, these men, and silvery hair and a gold watch from their attached pupil ; and they sit in the porch and make the watch repeat for their little grandchildren, and tell them long stories, beginning, 'When I was private tutor in the family of,' etc., and the grandchildren cock snooks at them behind their backs and go away whenever they can to get the groom to teach them bad words. . . .

'I Want Gossip'

R. L. STEVENSON TO SIDNEY COLVIN

608 Bush Street, San Francisco, California
January, 1880

... I'm vexed about my letters! I know it is painful to get these unsatisfactory things ; but at least I have written often enough. And not one soul ever gives me any *news*, about people or things ; everybody writes me sermons ; it's good for me, but hardly the food necessary for a man who lives all alone on forty-five cents a day, and sometimes less, with quantities of hard work and many heavy thoughts. If one of you could write me a letter with a jest in it, a letter like what

is written to real people in this world—I am still flesh and blood—I should enjoy it. Simpson did, the other day, and it did me as much good as a bottle of wine. A lonely man gets to feel like a pariah after awhile—or no, not that, but like a saint and martyr, or a kind of macerated clergyman with pebbles in his boots, a pillared Simeon, I'm damned if I know what, but, man alive, I want gossip. . . .

'For These Two I Will Sell My Soul'

R. L. STEVENSON TO R. A. M. STEVENSON

Saranac Lake, Adirondacks, New York, U.S.A.,
October, 1887

. . . I have got one good thing of my sea voyage : it is proved the sea agrees heartily with me, and my mother likes it ; so if I get any better, or no worse, my mother will likely hire a yacht for a month or so in summer. Good Lord! What fun! Wealth is only useful for two things : a yacht and a string quartette. For these two I will sell my soul. Except for these I hold that £700 a year is as much as anybody can possibly want ; and I have had more, so I know, for the extry coins were for no use, excepting for illness, which damns everything.

I was so happy on board that ship, I could not have believed it possible. We had the beastliest weather, and many discomforts ; but the mere fact of its being a tramp-ship gave us many comforts ; we could cut about with the men and officers, stay in the wheel-house, discuss all manner of things, and really be a little at sea. And truly there is nothing else. I had literally forgotten what happiness was, and the full mind—full of external and physical things, not full of cares and labours and rot about a fellow's behaviour. My heart literally sang ; I truly care for nothing so much as for that. We took so north a course, that we saw Newfoundland ; no one in the ship had ever seen it before.

It was beyond belief to me how she rolled ; in seemingly smooth water, the bell striking, the fittings bounding out of our state-room. It is worth having lived these last years, partly because I have written some better books, which is always pleasant, but chiefly to have had the joy of this voyage. I have been made a lot of here, and it is sometimes pleasant, sometimes the reverse ; but I could give it all up, and agree that — was the author of my works, for a good seventy ton schooner

and the coins to keep her on. And to think there are parties with yachts who would make the exchange! I know a little about fame now ; it is no good compared to a yacht ; and any way there is more fame in a yacht, more genuine fame ; to cross the Atlantic and come to anchor in Newport (say) with the Union Jack, and go ashore for your letters and hang about the pier, among the holiday yachtsmen—that's fame, that's glory, and nobody can take it away ; they can't say your book is bad ; you *have* crossed the Atlantic. . . .

His Horse Jack

R. L. STEVENSON TO SIDNEY COLVIN

(Vailima) Monday,
twenty-somethingth of December, 1890

My dear Colvin,—I do not say my Jack is anything extraordinary ; he is only an island horse! and the profane might call him a Punch ; and his face is like a donkey's ; and natives have ridden him, and he has no mouth in consequence, and occasionally shies. But his merits are equally surprising ; and I don't think I should ever have known Jack's merits if I had not been riding up of late on moonless nights. Jack is a bit of a dandy ; he loves to misbehave in a gallant manner, above all on Apia Street, and when I stop to speak to people, they say (Dr. Stuebel the German consul said about three days ago), 'O what a wild horse! it cannot be safe to ride him.' Such a remark is Jack's reward, and represents his ideal of fame. Now when I start out of Apia on a dark night, you should see my changed horse ; at a fast steady walk, with his head down, and sometimes his nose to the ground—when he wants to do that, he asks for his head with a little eloquent polite movement indescribable—he climbs the long ascent and threads the darkest of the wood. The first night I came it was starry ; and it was singular to see the starlight drip down into the crypt of the wood, and shine in the open end of the road, as bright as moonlight at home ; but the crypt itself was proof, blackness lived in it. The next night it was raining. We left the lights of Apia and passed into limbo. Jack finds a way for himself, but he does not calculate for my height above the saddle ; and I am directed forward, all braced up for a crouch and holding my switch upright in front of me. It is curiously interesting. In the forest, the dead wood is phosphorescent ;

some nights the whole ground is strewn with it, so that it seems like a grating over a pale hell ; doubtless this is one of the things that feed the night fears of the natives ; and I am free to confess that in a night of trackless darkness where all else is void, these pallid *ignes suppositi* have a fantastic appearance, rather bogey even. One night, when it was very dark, a man had put out a little lantern by the wayside to show the entrance to his ground. I saw the light, as I thought, far ahead, and supposed it was a pedestrian coming to meet me ; I was quite taken by surprise when it struck in my face and passed behind me. Jack saw it, and he was appalled ; do you think he thought of shying? No, sir, not in the dark ; in the dark Jack knows he is on duty ; and he went past that lantern steady and swift ; only, as he went, he groaned and shuddered. For about 2500 of Jack's steps we only passed one house—that where the lantern was ; and about 1500 of these are in the darkness of the pit. But now the moon is on tap again, and the roads lighted.

Negatives, Trout, and a Severe Dame

R. L. STEVENSON TO J. M. BARRIE

Vailima, 13 July, 1894

My dear Barrie,—This is the last effort of an ulcerated conscience. I have been so long owing you a letter, I have heard so much of you, fresh from the press, from my mother and Graham Balfour, that I have to write a letter no later than today, or perish in my shame. But the deuce of it is, my dear fellow, that you write such a very good letter that I am ashamed to exhibit myself before my junior (which you are, after all) in the light of the dreary idiot I feel. Understand that there will be nothing funny in the following pages. If I can manage to be rationally coherent, I shall be more than satisfied.

In the first place, I have had the extreme satisfaction to be shown that photograph of your mother. It bears evident traces of the hand of an amateur. How is it that amateurs invariably take better photographs than professionals? I must qualify invariably. My own negatives have always represented a province of chaos and old night in which you might dimly perceive fleecy spots of twilight, representing nothing ; so that, if I am right in supposing the portrait of your mother to be yours, I must salute you as my superior. Is that your mother's breakfast? Or is it only afternoon tea? If the first, do let me recom-

mend to Mrs. Barrie to add an egg to her ordinary. Which, if you please, I will ask her to eat to the honour of her son, and I am sure she will live much longer for it, to enjoy his fresh successes. I never in my life saw anything more deliciously characteristic. I declare I can hear her speak. I wonder my mother could resist the temptation of your proposed visit to Kirriemuir, which it was like your kindness to propose. By the way, I was twice in Kirriemuir, I believe in the year '71, when I was going on a visit to Glenogil. It was Kirriemuir, was it not? I have a distinct recollection of an inn at the end—I think the upper end—of an irregular open place or square, in which I always see your characters evolve. But indeed, I did not pay much attention; being all bent upon my visit to a shooting box, where I should fish a real trout-stream, and I believe preserved. I did, too, and it was a charming stream, clear as crystal, without a trace of peat—a strange thing in Scotland—and alive with trout; the name of it I cannot remember, it was something like the Queen's river, and in some hazy way connected with memories of Mary Queen of Scots. It formed an epoch in my life, being the end of all my trout-fishing. I had always been accustomed to pause and very laboriously to kill every fish as I took it. But in the Queen's River I took so good a basket that I forgot these niceties; and when I sat down, in a hard rain shower, under a bank, to take my sandwiches and sherry, lo! and behold, there was the basket-ful of trouts still kicking in their agony.

I had a very unpleasant conversation with my conscience. All that afternoon I persevered in fishing, brought home my basket in triumph, and sometime that night, in the wee sma' hours ayont the twal, I finally forswore the gentle craft of fishing. I dare say your local knowledge may identify this historic river; I wish it could go farther and identify also that particular Free kirk in which I sat and groaned on Sunday. While my hand is in I must tell you a story. At that antique epoch you must not fall into the vulgar error that I was myself ancient. I was, on the contrary, very young, very green, and (what you will appreciate, Mr. Barrie) very shy. There came one day to lunch at the house two very formidable old ladies—or one very formidable, and the other what you please—answering to the honoured and historic name of the Miss C—— A——'s of Balmamoon. At table I was exceedingly funny, and entertained the company with tales of geese and bubbly-jocks.¹ I was great in the expression of my terror for these

¹ Turkey-cocks.

bipeds, and suddenly this horrid, severe, and eminently matronly old lady put up a pair of gold eye-glasses, looked at me awhile in silence, and pronounced in a clangorous voice her verdict. 'You give me very much the effect of a coward, Mr. Stevenson!' I had very nearly left two vices behind me at Glenogil—fishing and jesting at table. And of one thing you may be sure, my lips were no more opened at that meal.

Incendiary

SIR WALTER RALEIGH TO HIS SISTER ALICE

Cambridge, 21 March, 1885

I was burnt out of house and home yesterday by my clothes catching fire from a match in my pocket and I kept walking along making remarks on the extraordinary variability of the English climate 'for to-day,' I said, 'it is certainly unbearably hot.' But on taking my handkerchief out of my side pocket I found it fringed with brown and large smouldering brown gaps all about it. I at once took off my coat conceiving something to be wrong. I then found that the coat was on fire and that the damage had also penetrated to underlying garments which had a hole the size of an orange extending its frontiers. I lost a coat by leaving it in an eight which was upset on the river the other day. If I do not come to a bad end I am at least unfortunate in my *close*.

I am going to play golf for Cambridge against Oxford which will be good fun.

P. Wales was up here today and came to King's Chapel, where he got prayed for. Perhaps I might manage to come at Easter : shall I try?

'Parties Who Pile Trophies'

SIR WALTER RALEIGH TO HIS SISTER ALICE

•

Aligarh,¹ 1885

I have seen it all again, and lain on my back on the marble platform of the Taj, by moonlight. It is a lovely building without a doubt.

¹ While still at Cambridge Raleigh was invited to join this Anglo-Oriental college as Professor of English Literature.

Mahmud says it affects him as being the finest evidence of conjugal affection in the world. That is exactly the point I don't like to think of ; it seems to me to be vulgarised by the fact that it is a tomb erected by a widower. I hate parties who pile trophies to prevent other parties from forgetting that third parties are dead. Besides the old sot left money for another for himself, but his son Aurung Zebe bagged the bullion and shoved the governor beside his late lamented in the same old diggings. I am not losing my nationality you see.

I will now tell you a joke of Jim's.¹ He concluded an attack on Christianity conceived in the spirit of the Stephen family by saying, 'the poet has remarked that Heaven lies about us in our infancy, but I am not one of those who see in that a reason why we should lie about Heaven in our old age.'

Some Academic Problems

SIR WALTER RALEIGH TO HIS SISTER KATE

Aligarh, 9 November, 1885

Considering that it will take three weeks for this letter to reach you it seems scarcely worth while to write it. It is like a will, all my convictions which express themselves here will be dead by the time you get it. It is very funny to get news of Cambridge—the native town of Aligarh is a mile and half off and there may be seen the customs and manners of many thousand years ago, just beginning to be a little changed by spreading English influence. It is asleep here and Cambridge is asleep there. Theodore Beck the principal and principle of this college uttered a string of adjectives descriptive of *Genus Don Cantabrigiensis* the other night from his arm chair which I forget and wish I had remembered. They were so true. He said, 'sleepy, self-centred, stunted, pragmatic, precisiam, sand-blind minds' or words to that effect. None of these actually, but by the bye I can swear he employed the term 'doctrinaire'. When he wants to abuse a thing he always calls it 'doctrinaire', while my gravest epithet of offence is 'practical'.

A great many questions which I had always set wholly on one side have now become practical for me. One is the question of punishment. Perhaps you could suggest? my state of mind is curious,—

¹ His friend, J. K. Stephen.

desirous to punish, I am yet opposed to every special form of punishment on valid grounds. Punishment thus seems to me a thing highly necessary to be done but impossible, except in a way entailing grave evils. I will discuss each form : (1) *Imposition*. Spoils the handwriting and fosters a mechanical habit of mind. Besides my pupils have lots of time and do not care how they spend it.

(2) *Corporal Punishment*. Improves the very bad and deteriorates the sensitive and good, hence tends to uniformity, which I hate. Besides, negative action is the stronger.

(3) *Deprivation of food*. Lends colour to the theory that we live to eat. If we eat to live, lowers vitality and health.

(4) *Treadmill*. Not supplied by the College. Contract prices high. I really cannot think how on earth to punish anybody.

(5) *Dismissal*. Goes to rival College which clasps the patient to its bosom.

I like some of my students immensely. I have already contracted the air of being acquainted with very nearly everything. So to-day in doing Tennyson, who resembles every other author in this respect that I very seldom prepare him before imparting him, we came to the poem of *The Blackbird*.¹ My eagle eyes espied the words 'jenneting' and 'espalier' advancing on me—these demanded explanation.

I thought first of a bold dash :—'espalier' of course was a kind of lance, for T. says to the bird the 'espalier and standard are all thine own' and a standard is a flag, banner, pennon, or ensign. In that case 'jenneting' of course is a small jennet or Barbary horse. But why does the poet state that the blackbird's occupation all summer was to thrust his yellow bill into the jenneting, or small Barbary horse? One resource occurred. The blackbird I might explain was an English fowl corresponding to the vulture and living on carrion. It sat on the

¹ *Blackbird* : in the second verse :

The espaliers and the standards all are thine ;

and the third :

Yet, tho' I spared thee all the spring,

Thy sole delight is, sitting still,

With that gold dagger of thy bill

To fret the summer jenneting.

Raleigh may be excused for not knowing this early eating-apple. Possessor of an ancient tree, I am torn between a notion that the name comes from French *Jeanneton* and my old gardener's assurance that it is derived from 'June-eatin'.

spear and flag and ate the horse. But then I perceived the exact phrase on glancing back 'To fret the summer jenneting'. *The horse could not be dead.* I was rid of the necessity of making the blackbird a vulture, he might be a blackbird, for the poet states that he drove his bill into the small horse merely in order to annoy it, and this is his 'sole delight'.

Words cannot express the lightning rapidity with which these considerations flashed through my mind. To appreciate all its grim possibilities you must read the poem, which is short. The student who had been reading it aloud now finished and it was my turn.

'Boys,' I said, and I cleared my throat, 'boys . . . this poem is called *The Blackbird*. To-day is Friday, your sacred day. It is not a suitable poem for a sacred day. We will postpone the poem. Kindly read *The Mourner* which comes next. Kalb Ali Beg, I am addressing you.'

The blackbird is looming over me for to-morrow and I am at my wit's end to impart to it a sufficiently secular meaning. . . .

I have made this letter purely academic, next one shall be about the influence of the decay of the elephant on the moral atmosphere of Hindustan (proper, not India). Or else on Cox considered in his bearings on the East. Or on the Anglo-Indian considered as one of God's creatures. He is asleep too, but his sleep is unhealthy in an artificial atmosphere—not like the good stodgy deep rooting slumber of the Vice Chancellor C.U. Cox is very funny. It grieved him awfully to find a man who lived on 3 rupees a month could accept no food from him, and while courteously giving him water, broke the vessel after. It pleased me awfully, I love the Caste System, to look at.

'Social Democracy' means all pigging together. Here the so-called lower castes have just as much tenacity and self respect as the upper. My punctuality is making the entire staff jealous. People flock out to see me cross the College quad at the hour and then go back to try to get ready their things in time themselves.

‘ *He Took his Encores* ’

SIR WALTER RALEIGH TO LUCIE JACKSON¹

London, 3 August, 1888

. . . It has been a lovely day here, the Serpentine looked extremely peaceful glittering in the sun this morning, with a certain quiet sadness, too, imparted I think by some dowdy individuals who were taking their pleasure laboriously and silently in boats. I had seen Alice off at Paddington in the morning—*she* is in a fair way for adventure if I did not misjudge some of the persons penned up with her, who seems excitable and inexperienced—and then I went slowly across the Park.

Two slim, grim, well-dressed youths had a large dog whom they seized repeatedly by the fore and hind paws and after a preliminary swing flung him into the water. As the dog weighed about five stone they could not fling him far, and he always came down thus in a foot of water, and scrambled out muddy and dripping to submit to a repetition. He took his encores with a cheerful submissiveness that puts our best actors in the shade. I remember a gentleman who lost his temper because I and a few friends refused to allow the play of *Hamlet* to proceed until we had encored his death as the King. Yet his thud in falling was scarcely louder. The joint owners of the dog (they must have been owners) went through the business with a mechanical and depressed devotion to duty that affected me much. . .

‘ *Stuffy Little Fellows* ’

SIR WALTER RALEIGH TO JOHN SAMPSON

. . . Oxford, 1 January, 1906

I suppose one does learn a little, even after forty ; and whenever here I come across a man who says that he stands out, and records his protest, on the *principle* of the thing, I strike him off my list of useful allies. There’s no need to talk about principles when you are really dying for your race or your religion ; the talk chiefly comes in when

¹ To whom he had become engaged.

you are dressing yourself, not to give anyone pleasure, but against rival beauties.

I wish I could get that Shakespeare begun. I fear I'm getting middle aged and shan't capture the zest. Moreover I'm sick of my own syntax. It's stiff and monotonous, and I can't change it. Everything I write seems pretentious. I have had to chuck an article I promised because I couldn't read it over without nausea.

Also I'm sick of what is called 'the serious business of Scholarship'—the baggage of the campaign. I've passed a wasted life; I ought to have written straight—on things. Now I can't acquire the art.

Doctorates are given daily to men who would never have got to be shop-walkers if they had been draper's assistants. The academic business is, in the main, a small-minded affair. The Comedy of Pedantry seems to be two-thirds of life. Soldiers are just the same. So, I suppose are sailors, even. The comfort is that Nelson hadn't a touch of it; nor had Napoleon, and their contemporaries did really know that here was the real thing. Men are stuffy little fellows. Their manliness bores me—it is almost universal, and humanity is very rare. A very wise woman, young and free, once told me that for the majority of human creatures only one virtue is possible—appreciation. The good, says she, are those that see power or virtue or beauty in those who have it, or a piece of it. The rest is vanity. This single virtue is not common: the poor things keep on struggling in a web of phantoms. They play with dolls all their lives. It's no good talking to them about beauty and wisdom. They have a complete system. There's even a doll Hell.

This is not Timonism, I am an optimist. They are saved, most of them by their guts. A doll has no guts.

An Englishwoman

SIR WALTER RALEIGH TO MISS C. A. K'ER

Dalnotter, 19 September, 1906

The junction worked beautifully at Crian Larith. There was a young stout athletic Englishwoman ordering porters about in a high superior voice that just fascinated me. I followed her about gaping like a fish. When she'd got all she wanted, the rest of us crawled out of corners *with our poor luggage, to see if anyone would take it up too.* No one

could move or speak till she had finished. We were birds to a snake. Tremendous! The porters just trembled. She was not beautiful. About 30. O, very stout! Hale. It's the De Vere voice. I wondered whether it would work in a real shipwreck. 'These two in the life-boat, and the wraps and the cloak in my seat in the Captain's cutter, and the two large trunks in the jolly boat, and get them all off at once, please.' Suppose someone laughed? No-one does. She'd die of apoplexy on the spot.

Of Certain Trees

SIR WALTER RALEIGH TO MRS A. H. CLOUGH

Ashton Keynes, 17 April, 1907

I am very sorry. I think I had better come on Tuesday, on my way back to Oxford, so to say, unless you'd rather not when the time comes. I don't fear infection so much as I do eucalyptus. Those who fear infection are half-dead already; it's not them that enjoys themselves. Which last sentence reminds me that the Clarendon Press wants me to write a hand-book of English Composition for the school-bred young. I wonder.

I am spending sleepless nights (I mean I have had a slight feeling of annoyance) because my final proofs (irrecoverable) contain the statement that in *As You Like It* 'the only tree is the oak'. This statement I accepted from an anonymous and immoral owl who some ten years ago wrote a most engaging article in the *Quarterly* on Shakespeare's Wild Life. Then, being in bed one day, when the book had slipped through my fingers, I remembered the following trees are mentioned in the play.

The Holly,

The Palm-tree, . . .

The Olive-tree,

The Hawthorn,

not to mention the gum-tree in the upper branches of which my critical reputation is now lodged.

Testimonial

SIR WALTER RALEIGH TO W. MACNEILE DIXON

Craigton, Fintry, Stirlingshire,
19 September, 1909

There's no use in all this examining. Far better to teach boys (and O! girls) that they must on no account write, that it's sure to be rot, and that we won't look at it unless and until they find a publisher. That would steady them. Then if they want testimonials they might have quite effective ones, *geared down*. 'A young man calling himself Mungo Mactosh has assured me that he has attended my lectures and that he desires worldly success. He is ugly to look at, but I have no reason for thinking him dishonest. I wish he had something to do. He has written nothing on Shakespeare, and can be dismissed, I presume, if he should prove less worthy of commendation in other respects.'

Three Anecdotal Passages

JOHN BAILEY TO REV F. G. ELLERTON

27 June, 1896

... Here, by the way, are two stories about parsons: one about the highest of them. There was a Medieval Pope—more than one perhaps—whose life was not all that it should have been: and his enemies published a *Life* of him describing his frailties, one of which was '*uxorem habuit in Bithynia*'.¹ The book created a scandal, and the authorities employed a man to produce a corrected and unscandalous edition. His method was the simple one of negating the slanderer, but you will allow that it produced surprising results when the readers of the laudatory life of His Holiness came suddenly upon the statement '*uxorem non habuit in Bithynia*'. I have left no room for the other story—it must keep. . . .

TO THE HON SARAH LYTTTELTON²

8 February, 1900

... At a dinner of men at which a good many rather distinguished personages were present, I forget who exactly, but Goschen and other

¹ 'He had a wife in Bithynia.'

² Afterwards his wife.

Cabinet Ministers among them, that horrid creature, Frank Harris, the journalist, *Saturday Review*, etc., was present, and was sitting between Alfred and Arthur B. He struggled to attract attention to himself, as such creatures do, and finally shouted—*à propos de bottes*¹—‘The great curses of modern life are Christianity and journalism!’ The falling of this bomb produced an absolute silence, in the midst of which Arthur Balfour quietly turned to Harris and said: ‘Christianity of course—but why journalism?’ Alfred says that even Harris was quite extinguished. . . .

TO WALTER CRUM

10 June, 1929

. . . Did you hear A. E. Housman’s response to the toast of his health at Cambridge? ‘Cambridge has seen many remarkable sights. It has seen Wordsworth drunk. It has seen Porson sober. I am a greater scholar than Wordsworth and a greater poet than Porson. It sees me betwixt and between.’

Constituent Atmosphere

SIR GEORGE LEVESON GOWER TO LADY WENLOCK

North Stafford Station Hotel,
Stoke on Trent,
27 October, 1892

I think that you once said that you regretted your disposition to allow the atmosphere to influence your frame of mind and were apt to envy mine as being less impressionable. To-day I feel no longer an object of envy, but rather of pity. It is just about sunset, only there is no sun to set, and the sky is overspread with one grey pall. In front of me is the station, built in sham Elizabethan style, with the gas-light from its windows glaring sullenly out into the gathering dusk and reflected in the puddles of the Square in front. In the middle of the Square is a statue of Wedgwood, the Father of the trade of the Potteries and Wilberforce’s friend, meditatively contemplating a vase of his own manufacture, with the rain falling on his bare head and dripping

¹ Irrelevant apology for irrelevancy.

unheeded from his coat-tails. The engines are shrieking and whistling as though in scorn at me, as I know from sad experience they will go on shrieking and screaming till an early hour tomorrow morning. The place itself is inseparably steeped in disagreeable associations of electioneering, agents, constituents, cold suppers after hot meetings, and of stale soles at breakfast, which are always stale owing to some unprecedented and never to be repeated mishap, and yet which are never any fresher the next time ; of German waiters and bawling bagmen and of other horrors, numberless and unspeakable.

My Father is sulky with me because I am going to stay with some amusing but eccentric people, to whose daughter he thinks that I am going to form an undesirable attachment, and I am sulky with him for being sulky with me, and sulkier still at the aforesaid suspicion.

The fumes of a substantial banquet, to which the feast of Thyestes¹ would, in my present frame of mind, be almost preferable, ascend to my room, where they contend for mastery with the smoke which comes down instead of going up the chimney ; a fact which an unnecessarily vivacious chambermaid attributes to 'chimney damp'.

The said banquet will drag along through four mortal hours, from 6 to 10, through endless courses and still more endless speeches, to which last I have to contribute one on the same invariable toast, to which I always have to respond every year. The feast is a complimentary dinner given by the Alderman and Councillors of the borough to the out-going Mayor.

The Alderman in the Chair is the one bright spot in the picture ; he is a dear, simple, quaint old fellow, with a squint, a white beard like an Apostle, of an honest and unassuming disposition and courteous address.

The dinner will begin in an hour and I have no joke, and don't think I shall have one, for my speech. This in itself is a hideous calamity, the full force of which you are happily unable to appreciate ; but I assure you, punning apart, that this is no laughing matter! . . .

¹ *Thyestes* served his brother *Atreus* with a dish of his own sons' flesh, according to the myth of the ill-fated house of *Pelops*.

' I Waved My Umbrella '

H. C. BEECHING TO E. V. LUCAS

3, Little Cloisters, Westminster,
11 January, 1905

I did not write at once to thank you for yr. kind pains because I was writing against time a lecture to be delivered at — a ridiculous place. (Shakespeare, you will remember, wrote some of his sonnets against Time, but he did not read them at —.) My journey and all connected with it was ridiculous. I stipulated for my expenses, wh. have not been paid me. Then after waiting $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour at N'hampton I was nearly left behind, because the train started from a different platform from the one I was told. Seeing a train in motion, I waved my umbrella at it, and to my surprise it stopped—a ridiculous situation again, and still more ridiculous at Northampton than anywhere else—the home of Bradlaugh, who did not believe in that old story of Joshua stopping the sun under the old covenant.¹ Well, under the new covenant I stopped the train, and so got to my lecture, having first lunched at the house of a brother of a friend of mine, who I found had married his housemaid—a ridiculous thing, and worthy of —, for no housemaid can be as good as all that. I think it asinine of my good Ernest to be leaving me for the sake of marrying the cook, but a cook is better than a housemaid. . . .

Near Great Success—and the End

CAPTAIN ROBERT FALCON SCOTT TO SIR JAMES BARRIE

March, 1912

My dear Barrie,

We are pegging out in a very comfortless spot. Hoping this letter may be found and sent to you, I write a word of farewell. . . . More practically I want you to help my widow and my boy—your godson. We are showing that Englishmen can still die with a bold spirit, fighting it out to the end. It will be known that we have accomplished our object in reaching the Pole, and that we have done everything possible, even to sacrificing ourselves in order to save sick companions. I think

¹ *Joshua* x. 12. 'Sun, stand thou still.'

this makes an example for Englishmen of the future, and that the country ought to help those who are left behind to mourn us. I leave my poor girl and your godson, Wilson leaves a widow, and Edgar Evans also a widow in humble circumstances. Do what you can to get their claims recognised. Good-bye. I am not at all afraid of the end, but sad to miss many a humble pleasure which I had planned for the future on our long marches. I may not have proved a great explorer, but we have done the greatest march ever made and come very near to great success.

Good-bye, my dear friend,

Yours ever,

R. SCOTT

Last Message to his Countrymen

ROBERT FALCON SCOTT

March, 1912

We should have got through in spite of the weather but for the sickening of a second companion, and a shortage of fuel in our depots for which I cannot account, and the storm which has fallen on us within eleven miles of the depot at which we hoped to secure our final supplies. Surely misfortune could scarcely have exceeded this last blow.

We arrived within eleven miles of our old One Ton Camp with fuel for one last meal and food for two days. For four days we have been unable to leave the tent, the gale howling about us. We are weak, writing is difficult, but for my own sake I do not regret this journey, which has shown that Englishmen can endure hardships, help one another, and meet death with as great a fortitude as ever in the past. We took risks, we knew we took them : things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint, but bow to the will of Providence, determined still to do our best to the last. But if we have been willing to give our lives to this enterprise, which is for the honour of our country, I appeal to our countrymen to see that those who depend on us are properly cared for.

Had we lived I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale, but surely, surely, a great rich country like ours will see that those who are dependent on us are properly provided for.

March, 1912

My dear Mrs. Bowers,

I am afraid this will reach you after one of the heaviest blows of your life.

I write when we are very near the end of our journey, and I am finishing it in company with two gallant, noble gentlemen. One of these is your son. He had come to be one of my closest and soundest friends, and I appreciate his wonderful upright nature, his ability and his energy. As the troubles have thickened his dauntless spirit ever shone brighter and he has remained cheerful, hopeful, and indomitable to the end.

The ways of Providence are inscrutable, but there must be some reason why such a young, vigorous and promising life is taken.

My whole heart goes out in pity for you.

Yours,

R. SCOTT

To the end he has talked of you and his sisters. One sees what a happy home he must have had and perhaps it is well to look back on nothing but happiness.

He remains unselfish, self-reliant and splendidly hopeful to the end, believing in God's mercy to you.

'Very Simple'

MAURICE BARING¹ TO HUBERT CORNISH

Copenhagen, 10 August, 1900

My dear Hubertine,

It is imperative that you should write to me immediately. . . . *Les Mœurs Danoises* are very simple; the King of Denmark meets one at the station and carries your luggage on his back to the Hotel.

I had a very wonderful journey here, but I was horribly disturbed on the steamer by a Dane in an Alpaca ulster and spectacles, shooting a stuffed wild duck in the cabin next to mine all night. When I arrived

¹ Maurice Baring (d. 1945) soldier, diplomat and poet, gives to his letters his own indomitable tenderness and gaiety of heart. How richly endowed he was for personal exchange, appears in the recent memoir by Lady Lovat. He had ways of civilized exuberance.

the British Fleet were sailing up the Sound and bombarding the capital, which was tumbling to pieces like a child's brick castle.

It is dark and raining, and the climate makes one feel as if one had no bones at all, and makes one's nerves sing so that you feel like Nietzsche and Hedda Gabler mixed ; but after a day I believe you feel gloriously well and wake up as Hereward the Wake.

I am going to take two delicious rooms with a stove and a sofa, and a spare room for you to come and stay in ; you must. I have already read more in the last day and a half than in the last two years. I miss you all very much, but I feel as if I was in Heaven, and that it was useless to indulge in *de vains regrets*—*Il faut beaucoup aimer le Danemark* is my new motto—and *beau comme un Danois* is my new phrase.

I don't think it is at all dank, but then there are no dank places except Scotland and the Isle of Man and South Africa. You will come here, won't you?

I have been reading a book by Maupassant and knocked down by his extraordinary mastery of his art and his tools—but here I stop on the verge of an ——?

Sincerely,

Florence and Persephone

MAURICE BARING TO HUBERT CORNISH

24 March and 6 April, 1907

My body, dear Hubert, has fallen to pieces. *It can't do without fourteen hours sleep.* If I don't go to bed at nine and get up at eleven, I feel a wreck. This phase has succeeded a former one during which I couldn't get to sleep till four, however early I went to bed. My brain on the other hand has likewise dwindled to a husk. It can't stand anything stronger than Max Pemberton's novels, and once a week a little Rider Haggard. I read a sonnet of Shakespeare's last week, and was very ill afterwards. All this comes of having been bitten by a mad dog and 'put in the hands' of Pasteur, whose injections have numbed me, body and soul.

It is very lamentable, but let's talk about Florence which is I know the coldest place in the world. I couldn't face it now after being saturated with the delicious warmth of St. Petersburg ; but there comes a month in Florence when the goddess Persephone walks abroad.

Sometimes it happens in March ; sometimes in April, sometimes in May, and it must be remembered that the adjoining months in which this doesn't happen are either freezing bitter with a wind that makes one cry out in physical pain, or they are a grey deluge of thin laborious rain. But when she comes, the wild tulips wave their heads over the brown furrows, and the dome of the cathedral floats like a petal in the distance ; and the intolerable azure of the sky drowns and deafens and stuns one, and the lizard comes out to listen to the footfall of Persephone.

It's best not to go to Florence till the Judas tree is in flower. . . .

' *History Flashed Past* '

MAURICE BARING TO DAME ETHEL SMYTH

B.E.F. France, 25 October, 1914

. . . When the troops arrived, singing *It's a long, long way to Tipperary* at Maubeuge, after forced marches in the dark, it was one of the most tremendous moments I have ever experienced. *The most tremendous.* They swung up—or the tune swung them up—a very steep hill over the singing pavement, and the French came out and threw them flowers, fruit and cigarettes, and they looked so young, so elastic, and so invincibly cheerful, so unmixedly English, so tired and so fresh. And the thought of these men swinging on into horror undreamt of—the whole German Army—came to me like the stab of a sword, and I had to go and hide in a shop for the people not to see the tears rolling down my cheeks. I couldn't let my mind dwell on it for days without the gulp in my throat coming back.

I went to Mass this morning and it was nice to think I was listening to the same words said in the same way with the same gestures, that Henry V and his 'contemptible little army' heard before and after Agincourt, and I stood between a man in khaki and a French Poilu and history flashed past like a jewelled dream.

' *A Peace so Secure* '

T. E. LAWRENCE TO ROBERT GRAVES

8 September, 1923

Peccavi : but always that happens. Look upon me as a habitual incorrigible sinner : and blame upon yourself part of this last silence :

for in your letter to me (that which caused the silence) you said, ' Tell me about Max Gate ' ¹—and I can't!

The truth seems to be that Max Gate is very difficult to seize upon. I go there as often as I decently can, and hope to go on going there so long as it is within reach : (Sundry prices I've paid in Coy Office for these undefended absences) but description isn't possible. Hardy is so pale, so quiet, so refined into an essence : and camp is such a hurly-burly. When I come back I feel as if I'd woken up from a sleep : not an exciting sleep, but a restful one. There is an unbelievable dignity and ripeness about Hardy : he is waiting so tranquilly for death, without a desire or ambition left in his spirit, as far as I can feel it : and yet he entertains so many illusions, and hopes for the world, things which I, in my disillusioned middle-age, feel to be illusory. They used to call this man a pessimist. While really he is full of fancy expectations.

Then he is so far-away. Napoleon is a real man to him, and the country of Dorsetshire echoes that name everywhere in Hardy's ears. He lives in his period, and thinks of it as the great war : whereas to me that nightmare through the fringe of which I passed has dwarfed all memories of other wars, so that they seem trivial, half-amusing incidents.

Also he is so assured. I said something a little reflecting on Homer : and he took me up at once, saying that it was not to be despised : that it was very kin to *Marmion* . . . saying this not with a grimace, as I would say it, a feeling smart and original and modern, but with the most tolerant kindness in the world. Conceive a man to whom Homer and Scott are companions : who feels easy in such presences.

And the standards of the man! He feels interest in everyone and veneration for no-one. I've not found in him any bowing-down, moral or material or spiritual.

Yet any little man finds this detachment of Hardy's a vast compliment and comfort. He takes me as soberly as he would take John Milton (how sober that name is), considers me as carefully, is as interested in me : for to him every person starts scratch in the life-race, and Hardy has no preferences : and I think no dislikes, except for the people who betray his confidence and publish him to the world.

Perhaps that's partly the secret of that strange house hidden behind

¹ Lawrence, of Arabian story, was here visiting the home of Thomas Hardy from Bovington Camp where he had renounced fame and rank.

its thicket of trees. It's because there are no strangers there. Anyone who does pierce through is accepted by Hardy and Mrs. Hardy as one whom they have known always and from whom nothing need be hid.

For the ticket which gained me access to T. H. I'm grateful to you—probably will be grateful always. Max Gate is a place apart : and I feel it all the more poignantly for the contrast of life in this squalid camp. It is strange to pass from the noise and thoughtlessness of sergeants' company into a peace so secure that in it not even Mrs. Hardy's tea-cups rattle on the tray : and from a barrack of hollow senseless bustle to the cheerful calm of T. H. thinking aloud about life to two or three of us. If I were in his place I would never wish to die : or even to wish other men dead. The peace which passeth all understanding :—but it can be felt, and is nearly unbearable. How envious such an old age is. . . .

Gay Rustication ¹

ANTONY KNEBWORTH TO HIS MOTHER, LADY LYTON

November, 1923

I have had a most amusing week-end at Taplow—A. J. B.,² Maurice Baring and Linky Cecil,³ all in killing form, and Edward Rice, who was at Nuncham—Elizabeth Gathorne-Hardy—Mogs.⁴ Ettie⁵ said that she had never heard of anyone being sent down for an adequate reason, and cited the instance of Guy Charteris, who was sent down for throwing a duck in the Dean's face and then kissing him! Also two brothers, one of whom was sent down for not reading a book of Xenophon before an exam, and the other for reading it during the exam! We played the two-people-talking-and-having-to-guess-who-they-are game, and she was quite, quite brilliant, knowing exactly who you were after two words. Linky said he was going to discuss an event with her and she was to guess who she was meant to be. He said, 'I

¹ Young Viscount Knebworth had been sent down from Oxford for an unlucky appearance at the room of a friend who had a roulette board. His life, which ended gallantly but tragically in flying practice, is beautifully told in his father's book, *Antony*.

² Balfour.

³ Lord Hugh Cecil

⁴ Imogen Grenfell.

⁵ Lady Desborough, his hostess.

think you were so wonderful under very trying circumstances,' and she answered, 'Yes, I minded the smell most,' and then the conversation went on for ages. She was meant to be Mrs. Noah and guessed it at once. I did the Empress Eugenie to Maurice B.'s Baldwin, neither of us knowing what the other was, and that did stump Ettie for about 2 min : she thought I was the Queen of Sheba! Doesn't say much for my grasp of my subject, I'm afraid. Linky told a divine story about Eugenie and Queen Victoria at the Opera. Eugenie before sitting down looked to make sure the chair was there—Queen Victoria sat down, knowing it was!

Ettie was very excited with that toy that you look through and turn the wheel and it makes pretty patterns. She showed it to A. J. B. who remained with an absolutely unmoved face. Ettie didn't think he could see anything, and asked him, saying that he should be emitting cries of delight.

A. J. B. said he never did that and that he was not impressed, as it was only a cheap form of a well-known optical toy which he had played with in his youth! He was absolutely killing about it for half an hour. . . .

This sort of thing went on all the time. It was too wonderful. Every now and then someone would talk about someone and Ettie and M. B. sitting together would try and guess from one sentence who they were talking about. M. B. always guessed right immediately, and so brilliantly that it quite took your breath away ; Ettie always capped it by guessing someone to whom the description would apply so far more funnily that the genius of the correct guess was at once eclipsed by the brilliance of the incorrect one. It was killing to sit and listen to, and I thought I must write it all down to you, though on paper it is probably neither interesting nor funny.

Floreat . .

A. B. RAMSAY TO E. V. LUCAS

• 19 December, 1932

Guthrie has only half-remembered what I told him. It was a more personal experience. But I don't know if you can transfigure it.

When I was still one of the younger masters at Eton, the Vice-Provost (F. Warre-Cornish) sent for me. He was an old man, and he *looked* about 100 : very thin, like a bird, and with wisps of white hair,

and a distant voice. He had heard I was going to Greece in the Easter holidays. In the privacy of his bedroom, and with a secrecy as of the Confessional, he told me of the sinful thing which had lain upon his conscience for fifty years. When he was a young man he had taken a lump of marble from the temple of Nike Apteros and brought it home. He pointed to it where it lay on his dressing-table. There it had lain through the rest of his life, silently accusing him every morning when he shaved. Could I, would I, liberate him?

Well, I could not say no : and there and then I undertook with most sacred vows to restore the marble to its place.

But it was of the size of a small leg of mutton ; and apart from the trouble of finding room for it in my portmanteau, there was all the difficulty of explanation at the *douane*. In fact there was no explanation—I forget the silly reasons I gave. But it wasn't confiscated, and at last it arrived in Athens, and I hid it under rugs in my room at the hotel.

They had recently become very vigilant on the Acropolis, and it was a criminal offence to remove any of the stones—even the smallest fragments. I didn't want to remove any, but it seemed to me that, if I was found with the thing in my hand, my statement that I was taking it back would sound rather thin. Several days passed, and still I did not dare to act. But I could not return to Eton and give the marble back to the Vice-Provost with a tale of failure. It would have killed him on the spot. So I took note that the time when the Acropolis was most deserted was after lunch ; and on a broiling afternoon I put on a long ulster—the only garment under which the stone could be concealed—and set forth. It bulged out from my side like some hideous malformation ; and when I had wearily climbed the steps, nothing in the world could have looked more suspicious ; and the one *gendarme* on guard followed me about at a distance of about ten yards.

Then I had my inspiration. I sat down against the wall of Nike and apparently dropped by degrees into a restful sleep. He watched me for some time, but then wearied of it and went away. Very slowly I let the stone slip to the ground under my garment ; and after a while I rose, stretched my arms, and made my descent. The rest of the trip I enjoyed with a light heart, and when I brought back the good news to the Vice-Provost it had such an inspiring effect on him that he lived for ten more years.

They have been discovering all the places to which the scattered fragments belong and restoring them : and I often wonder if this

stone was a long lost piece and found at last. At any rate they must have been puzzled, when they found it, by the grease on it which had fallen from the Vice-Provost's guttering candles : some of it was very old.

Well, that's the story. There is no more to say. And you are welcome to it.

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